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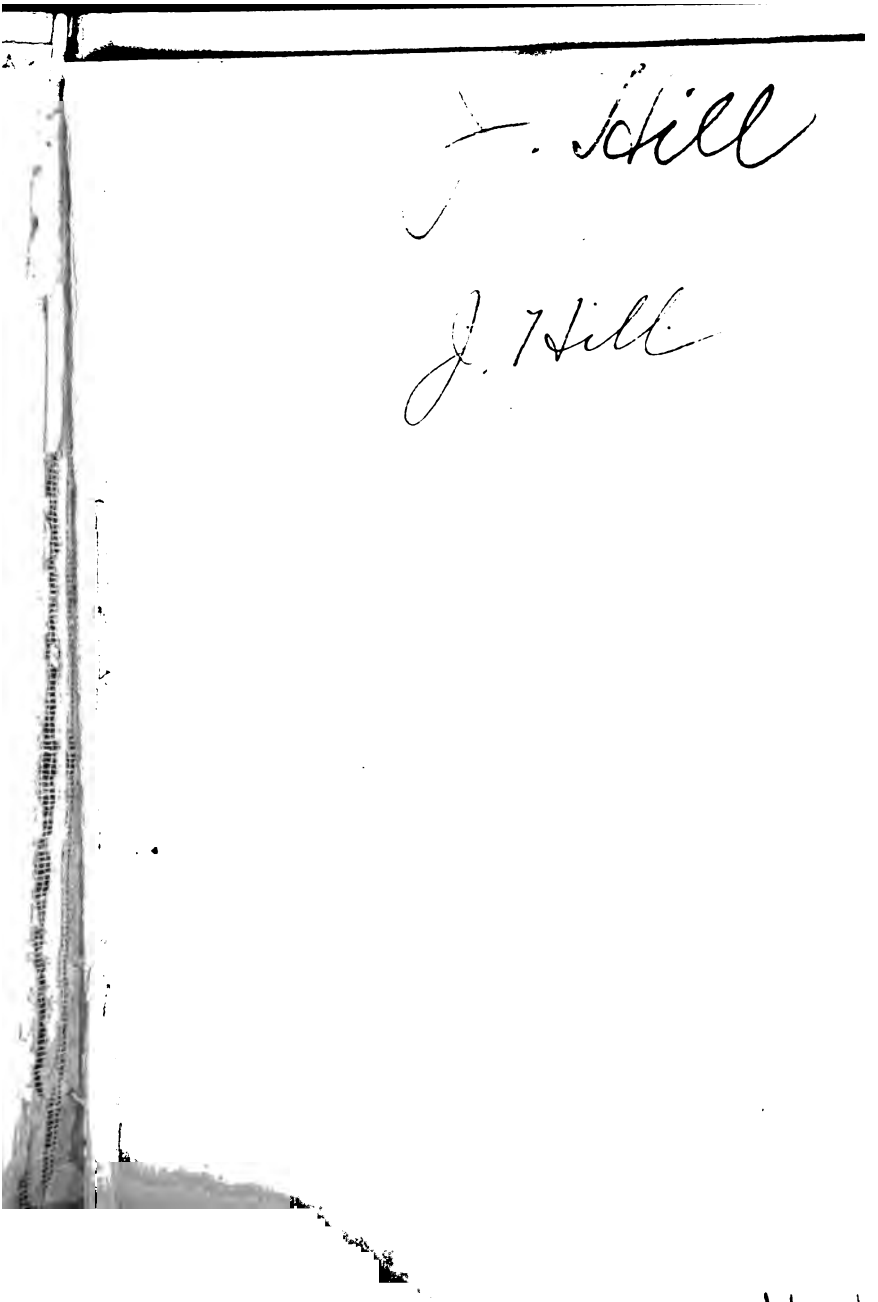

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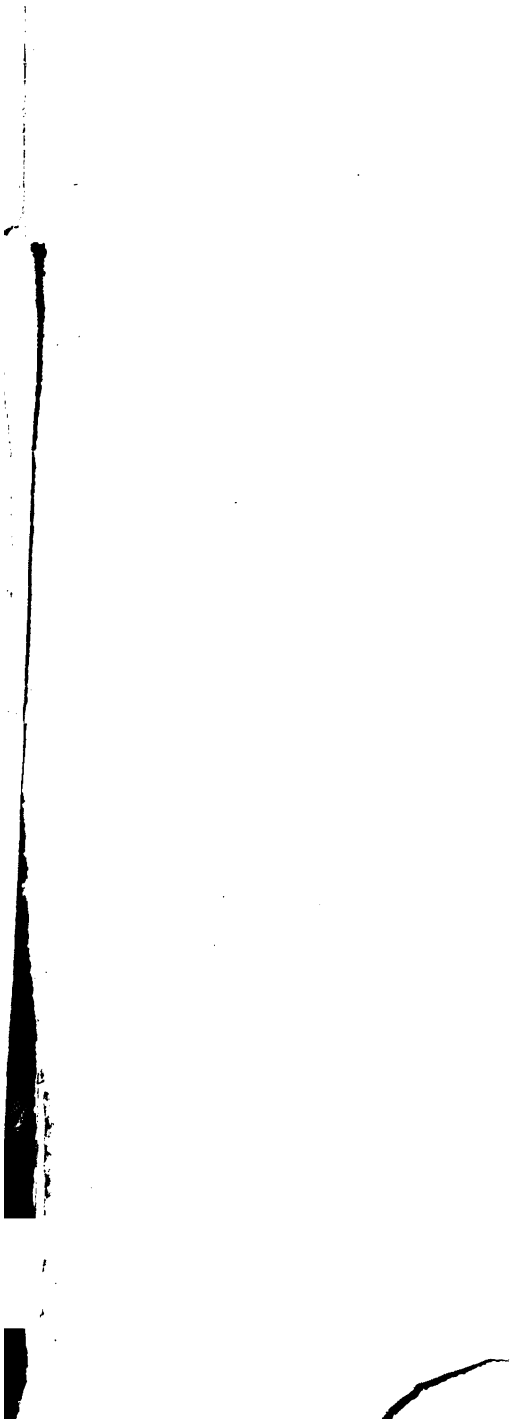

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A CHRONICLE

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BY

BARONESS VON HUTTEN

AUTHOR OF "OUR LADY OF THE BEECHES," ETC.

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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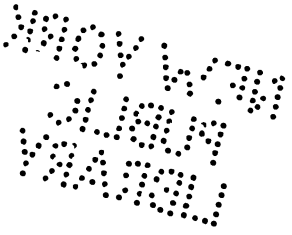

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TO MY FATHER

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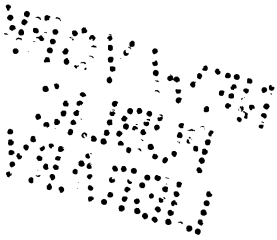

Whosoever resisteth temptation, he shall receive the crown of life.

ST. JAMES.

PART I

VIOLETT

I

Dawn. — A splendid apricot glow spreading like a smile over the face of the east, edging the small waves with gold, flooding their hollows with rich shadow.

A strong wind had blown all night, to die slowly as the stars faded, and now night had gone, and day was come.

At the edge of the little rock-bound garden east of the lighthouse stood an old woman, a woolen shawl over her head, gazing seaward. Under the fringe of the shawl crisp red curls, slightly touched with gray, fluttered in the damp breeze; her face, fretted with a fine network of wrinkles, was drawn into haggard lines of pain, her eyes dark with anguish.

While the light grew and strengthened, waking the birds in the stunted trees, she stood motionless, her gaunt figure rigid, as if she awaited something.

Then, as the sun rose, fading the glow with its splendor, she threw up her arms in a gesture of

despair, and falling on the rough grass, buried her face in her hands.

It was happening then, — at that moment; now they had hidden his face; now the clergyman had said the last words; now —

A deep groan broke the silence, but the woman did not move.

And the sun rose, and the greatest beauty of the twenty-four hours lay ready for those who did not sleep.

On the rocks below the garden the sea was singing its morning hymn; birds twittered; the morning-glories stirred in their sleep; a cock crew.

When at last the old woman rose, her haggard face was wet, and the merciful tears smoothing it into gentler lines.

With a last look at the sun, magnificent clock of the simple, she turned and went slowly across the silvery grass to the house at the foot of the great tower, and pushing open the door, passed in. The fire on the hearth was lighted, and from the curved beak of the bright copper kettle rose a plume of steam. The old woman hung her shawl on a nail by the window, smoothed her ruffled hair, and went on into the next room.

Here in a small bed a boy lay asleep, his head thrown back, his red lips slightly parted. The loose collar of his shirt showed the whiteness of

his skin below the sun line, but the smooth brow was brown to the roots of the hair.

The old woman stood looking at him for several minutes, and then, touching his cheek gently, she waked him.

"Vi'lett! Vi'lett, my dearie. It is time to get up!"

He was awake at once, staring vacantly at her with big gray eyes that were almost silvery, in contrast to his brown face. Then suddenly his eyes darkened with terror, and he caught at her hands. "Agnes, Agnes," he stammered, "Is it true?"

"It is true, my dearie," she returned solemnly, "and we must bear it. It — it is over now, God be praised, and his poor soul at rest."

The child rose and dressed himself without speaking again. The rosy flush sleep had brought to his cheeks faded slowly, but his strange light eyes were brave, and his lips drawn into a stern line.

When he went into the kitchen, old Agnes stood at the window with her husband, whose hand rested on her shoulder. Violett watched them for a moment, a sudden new loneliness closing his throat. They had each other, and he had no one. Alice was gone — and his father —

The old people turned, and both of them kissed him. Michael was crying, and his tears were warm

on the boy's cheek, as the three sat down to their homely breakfast.

No one spoke until the clock in the corner struck, startling them all, as if the silence, a tangible thing, had suddenly cracked.

Then Michael said slowly, stirring his coffee, and not looking up, "Vi'lett — it 's over now."

"I know. He 's — dead." Agnes nodded.

"Dead. And the dead are always to be thought kindly of. He was your father, and he never gave you a hard word. He was ever ready to do a kind deed; he was a fine lightkeeper, — them 's the things we are going to remember."

Michael took her hand in his. "Yes, Agnes, you be right, old woman. Only God is great enough to remember — the other things — wi'out being unjust."

The child looked at them, the early light falling into his luminous eyes, the lines of his mouth relaxing piteously.

"Agnes, did it *hurt* him?" he cried suddenly, and before they could answer, he had rushed from the house. It is better to suffer under God's sky than under any man's roof.

The little gate at the end of the garden was open, and without pausing, the boy passed through it and clambered down the rough path to the small stretch of shingle at its foot.

II

THAT afternoon a row-boat pushed off from the fishing village nearly opposite the island, and skimmed quickly over the brilliant water towards the landing-place south of the light. The two men in the boat, a barefooted fisherman and a well-dressed, provincial-looking man of fifty, both sighed from time to time, and glanced at each other with sympathetic sadness.

"I don't envy you, Mr. Barton," remarked Bob Venn at length, as he swept his little craft skillfully between two rocks that lay concealed but for the lazy movement of the water about them.

"You are right, Bob. It is a most painful business. Poor boy, I pity him with all my heart."

"Ay! Just think of it, the little lass had lived there all her life, — they had been brought up together. And — it was him that found her — dead — you know."

Barton shook his head. "And who told him — about his father, I mean?"

"Old Agnes. She has lived at the island ever since Godfrey himself was a child. She — she loved him. God help her."

They had reached the landing-place, a stoutly

built platform wedged in between two rocks, and drawing in his oars, Venn fastened his boat.

Barton got out and went slowly up the steps, leaning on the hand-rail built for safety in bad weather.

Maule Island was said by the fisher-folk to be an island at high tide, a peninsula at low. Off to his left, Venn could see the narrow line of foam that betrayed the jagged reef joining the island to the mainland.

Godfrey Maule had, the fisherman remembered, more than once run over the slippery, spiked rocks. He had always enjoyed showing off, and the possible admiration of possible onlookers quite outweighed in his mind the certain danger he incurred.

He had been a strange man, vain and audacious, afraid of nothing — Venn broke off with a start; it was a ghastly subject for thought.

As he walked up and down the little platform, he heard the sound of footsteps, and turning, saw, instead of Barton, Violett approaching.

"Oh, Bob," the boy began at once, "I am so glad to see you! They sent me away — Mr. Barton, I mean — so I came down here" —

Bob Venn blushed under his sunburn, and held out his hand, as he would have done to a man.

"I 'm glad to see you, too," he said. "Sit down here in the shade. It 's warm to-day."

Violett sat down. He was a small, lightly built child, with narrow feet and curiously mobile hands, which looked nervous, and yet had a trick of lying perfectly quiet on his knees for long minutes at a time. Venn glanced at them now. They were clenched tight.

"Vi'lett — don't you be bothering about what Mr. Barton said."

"I 'm not bothering. It 's only about money."

"I know. You are rich — they say " —

The boy shook his head. "Agnes says I must n't ever touch it, Bob, and I won't."

Venn was silent, and he went on hurriedly, "It was — Alice's, Bob, — that 's why I must n't touch it. Agnes said so, and then — she scolded Mr. Barton." A quick smile touched his lips.

Venn hesitated. "Look here, Vi'lett, Mr. Barton 's a gentleman, and we be only poor folks, but — I think Agnes is right. I would n't touch it either if I were you."

"I won't."

There was a short pause, and then without any explanation, the boy began to undress, and when he was quite naked, slipped over the edge of the platform into the green water.

"You be a fish!" exclaimed Venn, laughing. "More in the water than out, you live, don't you?"

"Yes." Violett's small dark face lay on the sur-

face, with closed eyes. "Oh, Bob, the *green* is so soft and warm."

"The green! That 's an idea. The color don't have any feel."

"Oh, yes, it does. And," his gray eyes opened wide as he spoke, "colors all have sounds, too."

Venn laughed again. "Here comes Mr. Barton." Violett turned over and swam away without speaking, and Venn, still smiling, looked up the path expecting to see Barton. He was again disappointed. This time it was old Michael, hurrying down the steps at a breakneck speed, holding in his hand something that flashed blindingly in the westering sun.

"Beer, Bob Venn!" the old man cried, gayly. "Cold beer!"

Venn smiled approvingly at the bottle and glasses, and laying his big hand on Corey's shoulder, gave him a mighty shake. "I 'm not denying thirst, Michael," he said, "Thirst 's like a pretty woman, a torment and a trial, but who would be wi'out her?"

The two men sat down, and drank the beer. "Vi'lett's clothes," commented Michael, glancing at the little heap of worn brown velveteen. "That boy is half mermaid, I 'm thinking."

"Yes. We thought you was Barton, and he cleared out. Poor lad!"

Corey sighed and licked the last frothy drop from the bottle. "Yes. It 's been a bad summer for us here."

"Barton told me that Vi'lett found the child. Is that true?"

Michael nodded, his wrinkled old face quivering. "Yes. Oh, what a fool he was, what a fool!"

"Hush, Michael, it ain't right to call a dead man a fool."

"Death can't make a wise man of a fool, nor a good man of a rogue, Bob Venn. And a fool he was to dream that good could ever come of — what he did. Praise God, my old woman and me we were blinded. Blinded by habit — there 's nothing like it. I was 'mazed when they fetched him, but when they ixamined me, I was dumb as a fish. Did n't know anything; had n't noticed anything; had n't seen 'im give t' poor lass the sugar, — and my old woman neither."

"That was a good thing."

"Ay. For look 'ee, Bob Venn, it 's a blessed gift of the Lord, stupidity like mine. I do be the stupidest old man in England."

"Happen so stupid they won't let 'ee keep the light?"

Corey started. "No, no, that 's all right. I sent in my apply as soon as they 'd taken 'im away, and I 've got all the papers signed in my box."

"I 'm glad of that, Michael. Well, here comes Mr. Barton, and thank you kindly."

As the attorney came down the steps he stopped the old man. "Your wife is a fool, Corey," he said sharply.

"Yes, Mr. Barton, but I 'm a bigger. I be surely the biggest fool in all England, God bless her."

"The money belongs to the boy. Why should he not use it?"

Michael smiled at him. "*She* decides all them things, Mr. Barton. Honored by your visit."

He stood watching the boat for a few minutes and then went back to the house. As he passed around the tower into the garden, Violett came up from the little beach, and walked tranquilly across the grass towards him, perfectly naked.

"Where 's your clothes, Vi'lett? Oh, yes, down at the landing."

But when the old man had entered the house, the boy, after hesitating for a moment, turned and went again down to the beach. Clothes were a very small matter to him; and to-day, his heart aching, his head throbbing with painful thought, his one idea was to be close to if not in the water that he loved.

He lay down in the warm dry sand, and tried to forget Barton's kindly meant explanations and

expressions of sympathy, for they hurt him. Suddenly he remembered that it was his birthday. He was nine!

It was restful there in the little cove; the shadow of the island stretched out over the water before him; sea-birds whirled against the blue sky; a fishing-boat crawled lazily across the horizon.

Soon it would be night, and Michael would mount the stairs and light the great lamps; then they would have supper, — apple-tarts, perhaps, as it was his birthday.

When he was a man, he, too, would be light-keeper; he would be the seventh Maule to fill the office; his father had been proud of his descent; his father would laugh at supper, and tell the story of the parson's donkey —

Then suddenly the remembrance of his misery came over him, waking him from his drowsy dreaming, and bursting into tears he buried his face in his sandy arms. Michael found him fast asleep an hour later, and carried him up to the house.

Agnes rubbed the sand from his little bare body and put him tenderly into his bed. "He giveth his beloved sleep," the old woman said, as she tucked him in.

III

FOUR weeks passed, and September had come. Four weeks of quiet, broken only by the visit of a government inspector who had toiled up the stairs and examined with minute care everything connected with the light. Violett followed, full of interest, and helped once or twice, with a radiant smile on his brown little face that at last attracted the great man's attention.

"And what is *your* name, my little man?" he asked, as though there had been in question many other names.

"Violett Maule."

The inspector started. "Maule? Dear me! Is he the son? — I mean I had forgotten that this was the place."

Michael nodded gloomily. "Yes, he 's the son. Vi'lett, run down and see what time it is."

Violett obeyed slowly, all the spring gone out of his gait. He had forgotten for a minute, and now he remembered. Agnes let him bake a cake for supper, and in the excitement of watching it brown he forgot again.

The first of September Michael took down the great market-basket from its shelf near the clock, and made his preparations for his monthly for-

aging expedition to St. Kilian's. Violett fetched his hat from the drawer where it lay between the few occasions when he wore it, and going to the pump outside, washed his face and hands.

When Michael and Agnes had finished their conference, and the old man had tied in a corner of his red handkerchief the money to be spent, Violett took up the basket. "I 'm ready," he said contentedly.

The two old people started. "Bide here with me, won't 'ee, dear?" Agnes asked him gently.

"Why, Agnes? I always go."

Michael pondered for a moment, and then said gayly, "Off with 'ee, then, and fetch the oars. Hast thy hat?"

As the child scampered away, he added, "Soon as well as late, Agnes. An' he 'd best get used to it while he 's young."

"No one will be unkind to the poor lad, Michael!" she cried, a flush on her hollow cheeks.

"Nay, nay, — not so long 's he does n't come in their way. *That 's* when they 'll throw 't up to 'im, old wumman."

She, with her womanly instinct, would rather have hid the child away from all the world, have hedged him in with her love, — the flowers to him, the thorns to the rest of the world, — but she knew that Michael was right, and made no protest.

Sitting in the stern of the snug, water-tight little boat and bounding landwards over the glancing water was a delight to the boy, and he laughed again and again.

Michael was the cleverest of story-tellers, and the tales of his own youth were nothing less than amazing. Violett believed them all.

"And when you found the cave, what did you do, Michael? How many kegs of rum were there?"

"Hundreds, dear. Piled up regular to the top of the cave."

"And did the smugglers come?"

"*Come!* I should think they did come! Why, there was I, one to six. Six big chaps with black beards."

"Oh, *oh!*" Violett wriggled with delight. "What *did* you do, Michael? I 'd have killed 'em all!"

The old man started, and his wrinkled face gave a nervous twitch. "Don't 'ee say that now, Vi'lett. 'T ain't seemly" —

"But I *would*. I 'd ha' taken my sword and — and" — Then his voice fell suddenly and broke into a silent sob. He had again remembered.

St. Kilian's is just out of sight of Maule's Island, hidden deep within two curved arms of land that almost meet.

The village is a rambling, irregular collection of poor houses, most of them fishermen's dwellings, and has besides its old church, two shops and a fish-market as attractions.

Michael, used to the free air of the island, disliked the fishy, close atmosphere of the narrow streets, but to Violett the little town was full of charm. The houses, white or brown, stood out from the sea against the splendid green of the hills behind it, and the rocks, covered with seaweed and lichen, were of beautiful soft colors that he loved but could not name.

Then there were flowers in some of the gardens, and often he returned home with an armful of brilliant blossoms won by the smile in his eyes as he peered through the palings at them.

Children, too, played about the shore and near the fish-market, and he loved to watch them and enter into shy conversation with them.

To-day, when Michael had tied the boat, the two went up the steep, cobble-stoned street to the shop where most of the purchases were to be made. It was a very warm afternoon, and the countless fish scales that lay over everything shone like tiny jewels in the sun.

In a garden a woman stood with her baby in her arms, talking to a neighbor outside the palings. "And her wi' a silk dress!" she was say-

ing, "the lazy" — She broke off, nudging her friend, and the two women turned and looked at the old man and the child who were approaching.

"It 's *him*, Susan, sure as sure!"

"Good-day to you, Susan Bennett," said Michael politely. "Fine hot weather."

The woman tossed her head. "You need n't talk to me, Michael Corey!" she cried shrilly. "You be a nice old man to stay there after what 's past! Shame to 'ee!"

Michael caught Violett's hand and dragged him away. "Don't 'ee mind, dearie," he murmured, "don't 'ee heed. You 's God's little boy, mind *that*."

The shopkeeper gave Violett a sweet biscuit and sent him outside, in order to have free speech while the purchases were being made.

Violett ate his biscuit, but he understood, and his eyes were full of tears.

"Won't they ever forget it, Michael?" he asked when the old man joined him, "It 's such a long time ago." It was just a month.

At the other shop no one was about but a strange youth who, with a comforting lack of curiosity, sold them two pounds of gray yarn, and told Violett that he looked like his, the youth's, little brother in Cornwall.

Violett was much interested in the little boy in Cornwall, and asked several questions about him. As he and Michael, the heavy basket between them, went down the slippery street, a woman in one of the cottages asked them to come in and rest. She was a kind woman, and after a minute's reflection Michael sent Violett in, while he fetched a fish-net that he had left some time since to be mended. The woman, who was busy ironing, in company with two others, set the basket on the table, and giving Violett a chair, offered him a cup of tea, which he gladly accepted.

"Well, an' how be you now?" she asked, peering curiously at him with small bright eyes. "Another spoonful of sugar? Yes, do 'ee. An' how be you, did you say?"

"I 'm very well, thank you," he returned politely. "There is a little boy named Stephen in Cornwall that looks like me. I wish he 'd come here."

"Did ye ever, Jennie? In Cornwall! Well, to be sure. How 's old Agnes?"

"Very well, thank you."

The fixed gaze of the three women began to trouble him; he wished Michael would come.

One of the women had unfastened the collar of her gown, and he could see a big brown mole on the whiteness of her neck.

"We was all so sorry for your trouble," his hostess began, after a pause and a look at her friends. "Was n't us, Luce?"

Luce nodded. "Yes. Awful bad to lose a feyther, let alone that away."

A feeling of sickness overcame Violett, and he set his half-empty cup on the table.

Jennie took up her iron and began to pass it slowly over a long brown woolen stocking. "Don't, Luce," she said in an undertone.

"Don't what, Jennie West? No one 's a-blaming the child. *He* can't help his father 's being hung, can 'ee, dearie?"

Violett rose. "I — I must go now," he said breathlessly. "I — wish you would n't talk about it."

His voice broke, and Jennie, leaving her iron where it stood, took him up in her strong arms and carried him into the sunny, flowery garden.

"Never mind, little lad. Her 's only a fool, Luce is. Look at they sweet red roses. Want one?" She picked several and folded them into the child's nerveless fingers. "An' there 's a butterfly — ay, and a beauty. When your boy from Cornwall comes you 'n' him 'll catch butterflies. I 'll make 'ee a net, like the rector's little gal has."

The good creature went on, comforting him

more by the sound of her kind voice than by her words, and in a few minutes Luce Kent came out, a big piece of apple-tart in her hand, which she gave him, and which was delicious.

Michael found the three in the garden, and as he took leave of Mrs. Kent thanked her for her kindness to the boy.

All the way home Violett romanced aloud about that little boy in Cornwall. He must come to St. Kilian's; he must come to the island and play all day with Violett. Michael must make a little boat for Stephen, like Violett's Good Hope. It would be so delightful when people could not tell the two boys apart. And when they reached home, Agnes had to be told all over again, and was as interested as any one could possibly wish in the boy in Cornwall.

IV

ALL good story-tellers know the inspiration of a wood fire, while winter howls at doors and windows, and darkness is blown about in gusts by a high wind.

The winter following Godfrey Maule's hanging was an unusually severe one, and in looking back on it Violett saw himself often sitting on a low stool by the fire, Agnes knitting at his right, and to the left Michael, his pipe in hand, his face half astonished at his own inventive faculty.

All stories gain by being told in the first person, and many old tales, known to most people as adventures of various great men of history, were long believed by Violett to have happened to Michael Corey in the days described by him as "when I was young." And the wind howled, waves boomed against the rocks, the fire stirred cosily, Agnes's swift needles made a pleasant clicking noise, and Violett sat big-eyed and listened.

Some of the stories referred to Michael's early days at the island, when he was assistant lightkeeper, but no mention of Violett's father was ever made. Poor little dead Alice, Violett's cousin, was also banished from the tales, as though she had

never lived. Once when Michael paused for a minute to light his neglected pipe, Violett said, "But, Michael, Alice was there, don't you remember?"

"Yes, dearie," returned Agnes quickly, who spoke latterly with great pains, that Violett might not forget his "proper English." "Alice was there, asleep in her bed. She loved you, and you were very good to her always."

Michael jerked his match into the fire and began to speak, when Violett interrupted him: "Agnes, what was the matter with Alice? You know what I mean."

The two old people exchanged a glance, and then Agnes said quietly, "Alice was not quite like other folks, dear. Her mind stayed little while she growed."

"Oh! Her mind stayed little while she growed. Then" — the child broke off, and then, turning, laid his head on the old woman's knees. "Then — perhaps it was n't so bad. I mean — father" —

"Don't 'ee think of that, my lamb. God has judged your feyther ; there 's no call to think about it. Go on, Michael." And Michael went on.

Spring came — beautiful as it is only by the sea — and summer.

Violett's life did not change, except that he

learned to row, and used to help Michael when they went to St. Kilian's.

The little boy from Cornwall never came, but Violett did not forget him, and down on the little rock-bound beach used to play with him, talking to and for him, and behaving with the greatest courtesy to his guest.

Once Bob Venn took Violett on a fishing expedition, and the boy sat all night watching the sea and the stars. At midnight Venn gave him some cold coffee and a bit of bread and bacon, half of which was eaten by the boy from Cornwall, and greatly enjoyed by him, as it appeared there was no bacon in that mysterious country.

The bears, great and small, the north star, and some few other luminaries were politely pointed out to the boy, who was naturally much interested in such phenomena, and who in return gave a very comprehensive account of his father's farm, on which his own particular charge was a herd of zebras.

When the chill that precedes dawn made itself felt, Bob Venn wrapped the two boys in a great coat, to the fishy smell of which the boy from Cornwall objected, and would have taken it off but for Violett's convincing him that such a proceeding would inevitably hurt Bob Venn's feelings.

On the homeward flight, the boy fell asleep,

greatly to Violett's displeasure, for it was surely a rather impolite thing to do.

Bob Venn, on reaching his cottage, expressed to his mother very forcibly the wish that he had six sons, all of which should go to play with that lonely little chap at the island.

The summer passed quietly, but Violett was not lonely, as yet, and when winter came again, he had a new occupation.

One day when Michael was at work in the tower, polishing the great reflectors, and Agnes busy bottling beer for winter use, Violett left the kitchen, where he always sat, and roamed listlessly through the other rooms of the house. There were only four, — his little bedroom, the bedroom of the old pair, the room in which his father had slept, and the little best-room.

In this room there was a small book-case full of books, and the sun, rushing into the room through the window he had opened, fell upon the gay bindings and drew his eyes to them. It was a meagre collection enough. A gilt-edged volume of "Morris's Poems," "Finelly's Light-Houses," "Oliver Twist," with Cruikshank's pictures, a Bible, "Robinson Crusoe," a "Family Medical Guide," "The Pleasures of Memory," also a gift-book edition, and several badly bound, badly printed books by one A. Humphreys. Violett began with a story called

"Horace Lynn," the chronicle of a remarkably uninteresting boy who became a clergyman. The tale was as dry as dust, but there were colored prints, and these held the child's interest, and when in a few days he had finished the book, he took the next one to it, and carrying it to the kitchen curled up in Michael's chair and began to read.

This story, also a child's tale, was called "The Adams Family," and the Adamses were destined to be his best friends for many years. They were a delightful family, rather unusually good, possibly, but full of the most ingenious schemes for their own amusement. Henry, the eldest, a youth of sixteen, was almost a genius in the carpentering line; Amelia made the garments of the whole family, the father excepted; Louisa sang like an angel, and prayed for her friends like one inspired. Then there were Edmund and Stephen and the baby Sophia. Stephen, having by a wonderful coincidence the name of the boy in Cornwall, Violett at once adopted as his own particular friend, and when he had read the book through three times, took to adding to it. It is easy to be a whole family at once when one is eleven, and in the child's mind Henry, Louisa, Stephen, and the rest soon became real people.

The baby, who never grew any older, was a

very important person, as she had the croup, which necessitated much care and long nocturnal gallopings for the doctor.

When spring came again and the beach could be used as a playground, all the Adamses used to go down the path every morning, Violett carrying the baby, Amelia laden with her work-basket. Henry's architectural genius rose to the most surprising heights at this time, and most people, not knowing what a clever boy *can* make with a hammer, a saw, and some nails, would have been surprised by the houses he built on the rocks. Louisa cooked for the family, and the number of meals partaken in a day by the party would have upset the internal organism of any but the Adamses. As long as Violett lived, the Adamses seemed to him to be more or less real people, though they did not grow older with him, but remained the quaintly dressed early Victorian children that they were the first day of his acquaintance with them.

Old Agnes knew about them, and was very useful in giving advice to them on different occasions. She advised a hot bath as first aid in croup, and though Mrs. Adams apparently scorned such a humble treatment and clamored for the doctor as soon as Sophy — it was always Sophy — began to bark, Violett once decided to send for the doctor, and while awaiting him to try the bath.

The effect was magical, and a hot bath, in spite of Mrs. Adams, became a family remedy. Henry, Amelia, Louisa, Stephen, Edmund, Violett, and Sophy — it was a happy septet.

There was more than one reason why Violett loved them. They loved him, and then they did not know that terrible thing about his father.

V

One day shortly before his tenth birthday, Violett crossed the grass behind the house, and reaching the rocks, clambered out on them to a great hollow one that was called the Cradle.

This was a favorite place of the child's, though strangely enough he always came there alone, without the Adamses.

Below him lay great rough crags over which the sea lapped in low tide, and which in high tide were folded away in her green draperies, and just fringed with white froth. Farther down stretched the jagged reef that led to the mainland. This reef, never hidden, always betrayed by a few dark points and fretted with churning foam, had a great charm for the lonely little boy. His father had several times, he knew, run across it, once when not much older than Violett himself.

Someday — but this was a dream, one of the many gentle, vague dreams of beautiful things that were to come to Violett, Someday.

Someday he was to take care of the light all alone, while Michael sat snug in the kitchen by the fire; Someday he was to find a sleeping mermaid curled in a wave of sand; Someday the boy

from Cornwall was to come; Someday — There were a great many Somedays.

And one of the oftenest dreamt-of was the one when Violett was to run at low tide swiftly along the narrow, slippery ledge, a misstep on which meant drowning, and with an easy, delicious spring jump at the end down into the warm, moist sand of the beach.

This morning, lying on his side at full length in the Cradle, Violett could almost feel the contact of the sand with his bare feet. He was not yet ten. His father had been sixteen — six years was a very long time to wait.

And then suddenly it came over him that he could not wait another day; that he must go that very minute.

Behind him, beyond the house, Agnes was working in the moist earth, loosening it carefully about the roots of her few flowers with a broken fork. Michael sat in the sun, mending clumsily a fishing line, for he was fond of fishing. And so near them, in the hot sun, the child they loved and cared for took his little life into his little hands and crossed the slippery rocks to the mainland.

He was slight and supple, and his bare feet were tough. The rough edges of the reef did not hurt him much; he did not slip on the glutinous sea moss; he did not grow dizzy — And then, just as

he had known it would be, his heels dug deep holes in the sand as he jumped down into it, and with a laugh of delight he fell sprawling upon his back.

And he was only ten, and his father had been sixteen.

It was all so perfect that he was hardly surprised to see, not far from him, a child playing with a basket and spade, the most beautiful child in the world, with fat mouse-colored legs and a white frock.

Violett got up and walked towards her. She was staring at him with solemn blue eyes. "Can you fly?" she asked. "Where 's your hat?"

"No, I can't fly. But I can jump. I *did* jump. My hat 's at home."

"What 's your name?"

"Violett Maule. What 's yours?"

"Mine 's Kitty Sudds. Violet 's a girl's name."

Violett explained to her that it was also a boy's name, for it was his, and as he was a boy it *must* be. Then they played together.

It was so beautiful to the solitary little boy, this new thing of playing with some one else. Humbly he obeyed the little girl's orders as if she were a queen and he her slave, and with the unconscious arrogance of a spoiled child she gave the orders, one after the other. They built a palace, they dug

a river, they raced with the waves, now creeping higher and higher up the beach. And time went on.

Kitty promised to go to the island with Violett, and he was to show her the big lantern. The stairs were high, but he would help her.

Then the little girl's mother came from where she had been sitting higher up, under a parasol, — a handsome woman with painted cheeks and large red hands. "Come along, Kit," she said, picking up the little spade, "bring your basket. Your pa 'll be waiting for us."

Violett, who was shy, took courage. "Please, may she come home with me to see the light?" he asked.

"The light? Who are you? Ain't you one of the fishermen's boys?"

"No — I 'm Violett Maule" —

Madame Leonora Sudini, trapeze-artist, pushed him aside with a little shriek.

"The boy whose pa was hung!" she cried. "'Ow dare you come to play with respectable children! Come along, Kitty!"

Violett stood still where they left him, his small brown face wan in the sun. Then it was even yet not forgotten. And no one who knew would play with him, it seemed. People could n't play with a boy whose father had been hanged.

At length he climbed the rocks slowly. The reef was covered; a gently moving foam wreathed and coiled from where he stood out to the Cradle. It was high tide.

Bob Venn in his row-boat came like a god and rowed him back to the landing. Violett did not tell the kind fisherman the morning's story, but Bob talked to him, scolded, and admired him for his crossing of the reef, and when the landing was reached Violett was half consoled.

Bob Venn loved him, and the Adamses! The Adamses did n't mind, either.

VI

Often as he played with the Adamses, Violett would stop speaking, and with, in his eyes, the vague look of the born dreamer, recall the bliss of that hour on the beach before the lady with the red cheeks came. Kitty was so beautiful, with her round eyes, invisible nose, and fat cheeks! And after all it was better not to have to do all the talking one's self.

He was not disloyal to the Adamses, but living people were so interesting!

There was never in his gentle heart the ghost of a feeling of resentment towards the lady with the red cheeks; he unconsciously accepted as a natural law of things that people could not play with a boy whose father had been hanged. And it was very sad.

Two years had passed since his father had been taken away, and he began to miss even Alice, his little cousin, though she had talked seldom, and had not been much good as a playmate. For the first time, the boy began to be lonely as well as solitary.

When he went to St. Kilian's with Michael the people were kind enough to him, but his shy efforts to be friendly with the children were met with an

awkwardness or an excitement that drove him red-faced back to Michael. Once some little girls admitted him to a sort of intimacy based on his interest in their dolls, but a slight dispute brought a circle of mocking faces around him, while shrill voices called, "Father's hung! father's hung!" until he fled, his hands to his aching ears, to tell Michael that he would come to St. Kilian's no more.

"Ay, Vi'lett, that's the best. You bide on the island; that's the best place for 'ee, poor boy."

So Violett bided on the island, and began to be lonely. One day in September Bob Venn came out and took him for a row. Violett sat in the stern of the boat and told the big fisherman all about Kitty Sudds.

"Was n't it too bad, Bob?" he finished simply.

Bob's eyes glistened. "They Sea-Urchins!" he said in a voice full of unequivocal meaning.

"How do you mean, Sea-Urchins?"

"Oh, it 's a house, a cottage 'bout half a mile inland, called Sea-Urchin Cottage. B'longs to Capes, an' he rents it to different parties, — play-actors, most on 'em. Don't 'ee fret, Vi'lett, 'bout what such as them says. You 're a good boy an' us loves you, by God."

"Yes, Bob, and thank you. Only I wish more people loved me."

The Cradle, as its outlook was towards the mainland, and from it he could see the place where he and the vanished phantom of delight had played together, became Violett's favorite spot. Here he would sit and invent Somedays by the hour, to the accompaniment of the nibbling of the waves on the rocks below him.

One day as he sat there, his arms hugging his knees, he gave a sudden start. Some one was on the beach — Kitty Sudds! The distance was so short that he could see the color of her hair and her sash.

His promise given to Agnes never to cross the reef again was forgotten, and a few minutes later he jumped down, as he had before, into the sand.

Suddenly a feeling of fear came over him. Why had he come? She could n't play with him. Oh, if he had only been some other boy, — the boy in Cornwall, for instance. He rose slowly with sombre eyes, and then his heart gave a thump. It *was n't* Kitty Sudds; it was another little girl, with pale yellow curls and the smallest, whitest face he had ever seen.

Miss Sudds had been a fairy; this was an angel. And she did not know that he was the boy whose father had been hanged. He shut his eyes for a

minute, and hoping hard that she would not ask his name, went slowly towards her, digging his bare toes deep into the wet sand to give himself courage.

The angel, however, possessed the useful social quality of forthcomingness. "Hello, boy," she observed.

"Hello," returned Violett.

"I 'm digging a hole through to China."

"Through what?"

"Through the world, goose. Help me — I 'm tired."

Violett took the spade and worked until he panted, while the angel sat down and looked on.

"My father 's going to give me sixpence when I 've reached China. He 's asleep there under the umbrella."

Violett did not like talking about fathers. "I 've got two shillings," he put in hastily.

"Have you? Where?" All roads led to Rome.

"I 'll — I 'll give it to you. Shall I?"

The angel scrambled to her feet. "Oh, yes, do! Now! This minute!"

"Can't. I 'll bring it to-morrow. Are you coming to-morrow?"

The angel nodded. "Yes. We are here for a long, long time, 'cause father 's ill."

The children played together for an hour, as the

sun lowered and evening came on. At last, tired, they sat down, and yielding to a curiosity that made him forget prudence, Violett asked her her name.

"Minnie Bayne. What 's yours?"

He paused. It was all over, then; as soon as he had told her she would go away in indignation; and he loved her.

"Stephen Adams," he said suddenly.

It was the first lie the child had ever told in his life, and it had almost told itself. He had meant to say Violett Maule and he had said Stephen Adams.

Minnie nodded. "That 's a pretty name. I shall call you Stevie."

And Stevie was the most beautiful name in the world.

Michael had missed Violett, and suspecting his whereabouts rowed in to look for him.

As the boat approached, the man under the umbrella rose and joined the two children. He was a pale man with very little hair, and deep-cut wrinkles all over his face. Violett had never seen such lines.

"Well, Min," the man said in a curious hoarse voice, "found a sweetheart, have you? What 's your name, youngster?"

"His name 's Stevie Adams, pa," answered the other child, "and he 's coming to play with me every day."

She could not pronounce the letter "r," and twisted her red lips fantastically in her efforts to master the difficulty.

"All right. Fisherman's boy, are you? Come along, Min; the Missis 'll give it us if we 're late."

Violett watched them go away with relief, for the boat would be in in a moment. They did not look around, but went slowly up the road, the man's high shoulders bent, the child hopping along beside him like a bird.

Michael was angry and a little cross, for Violett had broken his promise; but the boy hardly heard his rough words. He was thinking of Minnie Bayne.

VII

For eight weeks Violett lived in paradise. That there was little paradisiacal in the temporary inmates of Sea-Urchin Cottage, matters not.

Zola's great description of a work of art as being a bit of nature seen through a temperament may be, slightly paraphrased, made to explain happiness. Happiness is a circumstance seen through a temperament, and Violett's loving heart brought the light that, shed over his new environment, lent it a radiance that seemed heavenly to him.

Jim Bayne, "Song and Dance Artist on the London 'Alls," as he described himself, his wife, Señora Dolores Gomez, Musical Phenomenon, and Mdlle. Fée, in private life Miss Bayne, — these were the people who gave Violett Maule eight weeks of absolute happiness the summer when he was but ten, and the people who discovered in the quaint brown child the strange sensitiveness and capability of expression of impression that is called genius.

Day after day Bayne brought Minnie to the shore and found Violett waiting for her. Bayne then stretched his tired bones out on the soft sand, dozing until the children approached to tell him that they were hungry. The man was overworked

and ill, and only too glad to know that his daughter was in such good hands as he instinctively realized Violett's to be.

Minnie, a docile, delicate child, in the country for the first time, was delighted with her playmate.

Violett knew the most wonderful things. He taught her to lie in the sand just out of reach of the waves, and to listen with closed eyes to the music they made. "Do you hear?" he said once to her, "the beautiful green song?"

"I hear 'swish — swish,' but it is n't *music*, Stevie, and besides, music can't be green."

Violett sat up and looked at her. "Music can be all colors, Minnie."

The only music he had ever heard was the hymns and anthems played in the church at St. Kilian's and the fiddling of an old man who played at fairs and weddings.

Minnie looked at him a little awed, but still inclined to laugh at him. "You are a funny boy, Stevie. My father can play. Oh, he can play everything."

"On a fiddle?"

"No, on the piano."

"What is a piano?"

Minnie reflected. "It 's a long box with keys, — white and black keys."

"Do you turn the keys?"

The other child burst out laughing. "Oh, how funny! No, they are n't keys like in doors; they are white and black *things*. You must come home with me some day, and see them."

For days, however, they continued to play on the beach, or in the little wood that ran up the hill north of the island.

They played that they were divers beasts and divers people; they lay very quiet among the undergrowth listening to the songs of the birds.

Violett knew the names of no birds; the names he taught Minnie were of his own making. A yellow-wing, a welcome-spring, a golden-voice, — these were some of them. Each bird-voice, he insisted, had its own particular color, and Minnie's persistency in not hearing the color was the only thing that ever irritated him with her.

He taught her to see a bit of heaven reflected in the dew-filled cups of a certain kind of moss; he taught her to build birds'-nests. His theory was simple, — that if they could make a very beautiful nest some absent-minded bird might be deluded into thinking it hers and laying her eggs in it; and then the joy of being able to watch them being hatched out, and later of helping the busy parents provide the fledgelings with worms!

They built many nests, and arranging them care-

fully on conveniently low boughs, laid in wait quivering with confident expectation for the absent-minded bird that never came. But the best things were after all found at the edge of the water, — shells and seaweed, wet pebbles, the yellow lace left by the waves. Minnie learned to wade, and watched with admiration the swimming and diving of the boy, who slipped his clothes off and on with primitive simplicity, and ran about in his white skin as innocent as a little animal, until Bayne once told him not to.

"Why not?" Violett asked with grave interest.

The man hesitated. "Well, I don't know, but people keep their clothes on, as a rule."

"Not when they 're in swimming."

Bayne laughed gently. "Perhaps not, but you better not go in swimming when you 're with Min, — she can't go with you, you see."

Violett was satisfied.

A fortnight passed thus, and then came a great day, the day of the storm.

VIII

THE storm came up suddenly, blowing in from the sea, and darkening the water like the approach of an uncanny giant bird.

Bayne, who had been asleep, woke suddenly to find the air grown chill, the sky black. Calling the children, he found them standing hand in hand at the edge of the ocean. Minnie's small face was white with excitement. The sound of the wind, Violett had told her, was black, and she fancied that she could hear the color.

"Oh, pa! hear the wind! It is *black!*"

"Black? It 's bringing a storm; we must hurry."

The child held Violett's hand tight. "Stevie must come too, or he will get wet."

Violett laughed. He loved a storm, and no more minded getting wet than would a duck.

Bayne looked at him kindly from under his grotesquely bushy eyebrows. "Will you come, Stevie?"

And Violett went with them. The rain came down as they reached the edge of the wood, and Bayne, picking Minnie up in his arms, strode along, panting and coughing, his coat-tails flopping against his thin legs.

The villa was a shabby house with sagging doors and loose windows. It had a small garden with a winding path from which most of the gravel had mysteriously disappeared, and a few stunted trees.

When the little party reached it, the day of the storm, they went in at a side door, and into the little sitting-room where the señora sat reading a dirty but romantic novel. Bayne explained in a very hoarse voice that Min was soaked, and then he and the child went upstairs to change, leaving Violett face to face with the big woman in the white dressing-gown, who for some strange reason reminded him of the lady with red cheeks of horrid memory.

He knew that the señora played on little silver barrels, on glasses of water, on bottles, and on various other articles the musical qualifications of which were not patent to the lay eye. But there were no silver barrels to be seen, and the big woman continuing to eye him with the lazy benevolence habitual to her, he at length asked, not timidly, but rather with a sort of reserve, "Won't you please play on something?"

She laughed, showing beautiful teeth, and picking up a pencil from the table, played a wonderful tune with it on her teeth.

"How do you like that?" she asked.

Gravely he gave her his opinion. "It is funny, but it is n't music."

She laughed again, reaching for the soiled pink satin slipper that had fallen from her foot, and picking it up neatly with her toes.

"Min 's been talkin', 'as she?" she returned, in spite of her Spanish name, in the English of Limehouse Wharf. "Did she tell you she can fly?"

"No," gasped the astonished Violett.

"Flies like a bird — don't you, Min?"

The señora turned lazily to her daughter, who had just entered.

"Oh, Minnie, are n't you afraid?" Violett was awed.

Minnie tossed her hair, which possessed the peculiarity of being tails in the morning, curls in the afternoon. "I ain't afraid. Mr. Lobbs catches me, and the band plays 'Don't You wish You could?'"

She was an abnormally slight little creature with blue rings about her eyes, and an exhausted voice that now and then threatened to go out altogether. She was only eight, always said "beaucause," and her r's turned to v's, greatly to her distress. Violett watched her as she made her declaration of fearlessness with a strange feeling in his heart, a feeling almost paternal. He loved her so!

"Pa, play something to Stevie. 'E 's never seen a piano!"

Bayne laughed, and sitting down before the black box in the corner, opened its mouth, and its big teeth grinned a welcome to Violett Maule.

The air the Song and Dance man played was "Loch Lomond." When he had played it he turned. In his excitement the boy had drawn his thick black brows down over his light eyes, and his face was like a grim little mask. Slowly he drew near to the wonderful thing, and stretching out his hand without speaking, touched a few keys, one at a time, very gently. "I want it to say what it did to you."

The señora laughed. "Lord bless you, Stevie, it was Bayne as done it!"

Violett shook his head. "I want it to say what it did to you," he insisted. Then he began to touch the piano with both hands, in perfect rhythm, but of course there was no melody, and suddenly he banged both closed fists down on the discolored keys, his eyes flashing fire.

The señora was delighted, but Bayne, watching the angry young face with sudden interest, began to play the air simply, with one finger. The child followed, slowly, hesitatingly: then he began on another note and played it in a new key, counting under his breath and going on from key to key slowly, laboriously, but at last almost without a fault.

Suddenly he stopped. "That 's all clear blue — do you hear, Min?"

"What do you mean, Stevie?" It was Bayne who spoke, his ugly thin face alight with interest.

"I mean the color of the song — of the music. It is blue; you hear it? It was red when you played it first, but this is prettier."

Bayne shook his head. "But it 's just the same tune wherever I play it."

"Oh, yes," explained Violett patiently, "only it 's a different *color*." And Bayne, placing him in a window, with his back to the piano, tried him in all the keys. C major, the original, remained red, a color he hated, and B flat major the blue he loved.

The storm was over and the sky clear again when Violett said good-by to the Baynes and set out for home. As was his custom, he went down the road to St. Kilian's, as far as Bob Venn's lonely cottage, and begged the good fisherman to row him to the island. "Bob," the child said as the boat bounded along over the high waves, "Minnie's father has a piano."

"Has he, now? The Rector has one too, but I 've never seen it. What 's it like, Vi'lett?"

Violett trailed his hand in the water. "It 's a big box, Bob, full of music that comes when you call it. It is more beautiful than everything in the world except the sea."

IX

THAT night Violett awoke in his little dark room with the most wonderful sensation. He had been playing on a piano, making music that still rang in his ears, and his hands rested on the cool keys quiet and gentle, full of the stillness of strength and power. He could play!

The child lay still for several seconds, enjoying the consciousness with a keenness that was almost pain, and then — the keys were only the sheet on his bed, and he only Violett Maule, who could not play.

It was a bitter disappointment, but one consolation remained. Above and around the sound of the waves on the rocks, interwoven and blended with that music which had been in his ears all his life, pulsed the splendid melody that he had heard in his dream. And he knew that it was the song of the sea which had suddenly become intelligible to him. He had heard it all his life, and yet he heard it now for the first time.

Quietly he rose, and dressing in the darkness, for fear of disturbing Agnes and Michael, the child went out into the night. It was a very black night, moonless and starless. The sea was still rhythmically singing its song; and standing in the

little garden, Violett raised his frail child's voice and joined in the music.

It was the most beautiful music in the world, and it had come to him. All his life it seemed that music came to him, not that he himself made it. His voice disturbed a bird in a tree; it chirped fretfully. After a pause the boy went down to the little beach. It was warmer there in the sheltered cove, and the warm sand pleasant to his bare feet.

And the sea sang, and at its edge stood the boy, listening in the darkness.

X

THE next morning Violett was kept busy skimming the froth from a brass kettle of cooking fruit. Agnes was making jelly. He was not discontented, — he was never that, — but when dinner was over, he sped at once to the Sea-Urchin to tell Minnie the wonderful tale of the night. When he reached the cottage he found its inmates very busy, a surprising state of things. Mrs. Bayne was moving slowly about the small parlor, dusting the ornaments, her white dressing-gown trailing rather magnificently on the shabby carpet. Bayne was in the garden, arranging in a corner under the trees a table and several chairs, and even Minnie was at work stuffing tight-packed bunches of asters into three vases, on the little balcony, — her hair, instead of hanging limply far below her waist, as was usual at that time of day, rolled up into hard lumps on the back of her head and bristling with crossed hairpins.

"Oh, Stevie," she cried as he came up the path, "we 're going to have company! A party!"

Violett stood still; his heart sank.

"Oh!" he said.

The señora, who had come out from her labors

and stood behind her daughter, smiled, and waved her large white hand graciously.

"You may come too, Stevie. There is always room for one more at the Baynes'."

"Oh, thank you, Señora. I — I *thank* you."

His eyes filled with tears of gratitude, which the big woman saw, and which gratified her.

"Only a few friends — faithful friends," she went on, laying her hand, in which the duster might have been a lace handkerchief, on Minnie's head. "A little supper, a little music — that is all. As the Bible says, 'a feast of friends and a flow of soul.'"

Her h's were unsteady, her a's trended i-ward as the sparks fly upward, but her voice was big and mellow, her manner really rather splendid.

Violett adored her. He had become used to her resemblance to the lady with the red cheeks, and unconsciously set it down to its right source: the señora, too, had red cheeks and red lips. When he had admired the arrangement of the parlor, which had burst into a bloom of photographs and bric-a-brac, and been taken upstairs by Minnie to admire the señora's gown that lay spread over the bed, a glory of mauve satin and small glittering things like fish-scales in the sun, Minnie sent Violett home to dress. "I 'm going to wear my pink sash, Stevie, an' my co-vals. What 'll you wear?"

Violett's Sunday suit looked, as he surveyed it an hour later, — after having run all the way to Bob Venn's cottage and prevailed on the fisherman's mother, in the absence of her son, to row him home, — very inadequate to the great occasion.

"Agnes," he said gravely, "I need a new coat."

"Yes. You shall have one for Christmas, Vi'lett."

"But, Agnes, am I very poor? Mr. Barton said there was money" —

The old woman pushed back her close red curls impatiently. "Thou 's too little to understan', my dearie. Trust old Agnes, and don't 'ee bother 'bout coat. Come, brush your hair."

To his surprise, in spite of the tightness of his coat and the shortness of his trousers, Violett was a success at the party.

When he came in, shy and still, one of the faithful friends, a yellow-haired lady with big glistening stones in her ears, gave a little shriek.

"Oh, you sweet boy! Come here and tell me your name!"

She took Violett's hand and pushed his brown hair back from his brown brow.

"Lor, Dooloars, what a lovely little fellow! Quite the gentleman, too!"

The señora, who was fanning herself with lan-

guid grace, nodded slowly. "Oh, yes, indeed, Clare. 'Is father's 'istory is most interesting. I must tell it to you."

Violett turned perfectly white under his sunburn, and gripped the yellow-haired lady's hand so tight that she winced.

"Good gracious! 'ow 'e squeezed my 'and!" she said, with a giggle, as Violett drew away from her and went out on the balcony, where Minnie was sitting.

So the señora knew about his father. And she had let him stay. And she was good to him. His head whirled, his lips shook. He would *die* for the señora. He would —

Minnie looked up at him curiously. "Why, Stevie, whatever is the matter?" she asked, smoothing the folds of her very clean frock.

"Nothing," Violett returned. "Oh, Minnie, how beautiful your mother is!"

One of the men heard his remark, and turning repeated it to the company. Every one screamed with laughter, but the señora's dignity was unshaken. "Poor child," she murmured to Mrs. St. Pierre, who was a leading dramatic luminary in certain small cities, "'e 's *that* fond of me. As I was saying, 'is father was younger son to a dook. I was told in confidence, so I cawn't tell the nime, but 'e married" — Violett was admiring Minnie's

curls now, as they hung over the back of her chair. He did not hear.

His heart was big with gratitude and love.

Supper was served at seven. Beside homelier dainties there was a great pink cake from town, an 'umble tribute from the St. Pierres; chocolates in a glazed box, brought by Mr. Lobb, a small man with enormous shoulders and a broken front tooth; and to crown the whole, rivers of champagne, which the company drank out of tumblers.

The señora, in the contemplation of whose suddenly slender waist Violett was much interested, presided with a grace the little boy firmly believed unique; opposite her sat Bayne, his pale face ghastly above his black coat and white satin cravat.

Mr. Lobb sat by the señora, Mrs. St. Pierre by the host, — Mr. St. Pierre, a youth of twenty, and the other lady, Miss Mae Bohun, and the two children occupying the other seats.

Violett was very silent, but he was so happy that he trembled.

The old care-taker, Mrs. Binns, who lived at Sea-Urchin Cottage all the year round, came in at length and removed from the table that part of the service which belonged to the house.

"I ain't a-goin' to 'ave *my* things smashed," she answered, when remonstrated with, "and I can see 'ow things is a-goin'."

Instead of being angry, as Violett expected, the señora and the guests laughed helplessly, and Miss Bohun spilt her champagne on Mr. St. Pierre's sleeve, an accident that apparently gave Mr. St. Pierre the greatest satisfaction.

Only four glasses remaining after the rescue by Mrs. Binns, the ladies consented to drink out of the gentlemen's glasses. Violett thought them all so good-humored. He liked champagne, and the señora gave him a great deal.

Mrs. St. Pierre sang a ballad, about a little boy who tried to find the road to heaven, whither his mother had gone; Mr. St. Pierre gave a recitation, of which he unfortunately forgot the end, though no one seemed to notice the omission. Bayne was urged to sing, and refused. He was the least agreeable of the party, Violett thought. Miss Bohun, urged to "do" a dance, regretted her inability to oblige, as champagne always went to her feet. And Violett, longing to do something great and beautiful for them all, because they did not mind about his father, leaned back in his chair and fell asleep.

XI

JIM BAYNE played every day for Violett. It amused him to play something and then make the child sing it to him. Then he would repeat the song in another key, and Violett, commenting gravely, "Now it 's blue," or "Now it 's gray," his way of explaining the change of tone, would sing it, almost without exception, unerringly.

Bayne could not talk much, for talking made him cough, but once he burst out impatiently, "It 's all rot about the colors, Stevie! Music ain't got any color, and it 's wicked to tell lies."

Violett looked at him.

"I 'm not telling lies. It is *true*. Can't you hear that that is blue? And when you play it two keys higher up, it turns green, like lime-leaves in the spring. I wish you could hear it."

Bayne could not hear it, nor could the señora or Minnie, so Violett tried to keep his sensations to himself, but it no more occurred to him that he could not hear color than that he could not hear sound.

The señora, who was possessed of a languid grace supposedly due to her Spanish extraction, used to lie on the sofa during the lessons, nibbling chocolates and picking up her constantly falling

satin slippers with her remarkably prehensile toes.

"Play 'im something lively, Jim," she suggested once, when Violett had been transposing "Loch Lomond" into several keys, Bayne looking on.

Her husband shook his head. "No, Dooloars," he returned. "'E needs to 'ear good stuff, and I 'm blessed if I know any."

Violett paused, smiling at him.

"It is all good, Mr. Bayne, what you play."

But Bayne shook his head again.

"'E needs instruction, that 's what 'e needs," he went on later to the señora. "'E 's got genius, that boy, and I — I can't teach 'im."

"Genius don't need instruction, you old gaby," Señora Dolores scoffed good-naturedly. "Genius teaches itself. Who taught me to play on goblets?"

Years ago Bayne had had a sense of humor, and even now the shadow of a smile passed over his cadaverous face. Then he answered, returning to Violett in his mind, —

"Genius needs instruction more than anything. It 's a good slave, but a bad master."

But the señora had dropped asleep, and did not hear him.

Mr. Winnock, the rector of the parish, was

walking in his sweet old walled garden a few evenings later, looking at his ripening wall-fruit and enjoying his roses, when some one knocked at the gate. The rector opened it, and Jim Bayne came in.

"I beg your pardon, sir," the man began hoarsely, "I am the tenant of Sea-Urchin Villa."

Mr. Winnock nodded blandly. He was a large, handsome man of middle age, with a peculiarly fine voice. "Indeed?" he asked.

"My name is Bayne. If I might sit down? I 've no lungs to speak of, sir."

The rector led him to a bench, and stood looking approvingly at the sunset until the music-hall artist had got his breath.

"There 's a boy that plays with my girl, sir, and 'e 's a musical genius, unless I 'm much mistaken, which I ain't."

"A musical genius?"

"Yes, sir. 'E 's only ten, and he plays by ear everything I play for him. 'E plays 'Andel's Largo in every key on the board."

Mr. Winnock was interested. "Dear me — does he, really?"

Bayne studied the handsome, rather stupid face with the keenness of the clever man who has had to earn his bread.

"I have heard you preach, sir," he went on

politely, "and I says to myself, 'Bayne, Mr. Winnock is the man to know what to do with Stevie; 'e 's the only one hereabouts who would understand genius ' " —

"You flatter me, Mr. B—Baynes." Which was truer than he knew.

"Only ten, you say? But many children play by ear. I did myself."

"Mr. Winnock — if I may make so free, sir — you let him play to you. I 'm an artist myself and I 've had a lot to do with artists. *I* know. Stevie is born to be great."

The rector smiled at him.

"*Stevie?* Surely not Stephen Love, the shepherd's boy?"

"No, no! The lightkeeper's boy, Mr. Winnock. The little brown chap with light eyes" —

"But that 's poor little Maule! Violett Maule! God bless my soul! Why do you call him Stevie?"

Bayne stared. "*Violett?* 'E said 'is name was Stephen — Stephen Adams, sir!"

"Dear me, dear me, that is bad, very bad! A child of ten lying about his own name! However, the poor boy has reason enough to be ashamed of his."

Bayne looked his inquiry.

"It was his father who poisoned the little half-

witted child two years and a half ago, for her inheritance" —

"Was it indeed! Well really, now!" Bayne's ugly face was full of pity. "Poor boy!"

Before he left the now shadowy garden, he had persuaded the rector to shed the light of his countenance on Violett.

Bayne said nothing to his wife and daughter about Violett's real name.

XII

THE rector came, heard, and was conquered. The result of his interest was at first a most horrible one to Violett.

He was given piano lessons. Every other day he went to the Baynes', and for an hour was instructed in the elements of the art of music by a little Frenchwoman who had come to the neighborhood as a governess, married the village apothecary, and settled there. Her name was legally Mrs. Patch, but she having, before her courtship began, nicknamed the obsequious little apothecary, in translation of his name, La Mouche, her pupils in turn dubbed her Mouchette, and Mouchette she had remained, though twenty years had passed since her marriage.

Mouchette, then, a small, trim person with beautiful little hands and an elaborate coiffure of curls and braids, came, armed with a well sharpened pencil and an apple, in what Minnie and Violett called her "ridiculous bag," to teach Violett to play the piano.

Those were hours of rapturous torture for the little old woman, for Violett hated his lessons, and showed an ingenuity in tormenting her that evoked Minnie's jubilant admiration. The apple,

cut into halves, quarters, eighths, etc., was used to teach him the value of the notes, — something that he never learned.

Then he refused gently but absolutely to call the keys by any but their color names, and as he could play anything by ear when he had heard it twice, the little duets she tried to teach him nearly killed her.

Suddenly, without breaking off, the boy would change into another key, and go on quite correctly in that key, but thereby turning poor Mouchette's simple accompaniment into the most hideous discord.

Her admiration for him was infinite, but sometimes she cried from sheer vexation; then he would kiss her pretty hands, and be very good for the rest of the hour.

What they both enjoyed the most was when Violett stood looking away from the piano, and called out to her the names of the keys as she played different things to him.

"Red! bah! — horrid bright red!"

"Oh, Stevie!"

"Well, C major, then. Go on! That 's green — I mean F sharp major. I should think *any* one could hear that green."

He was very dull about learning to read notes, and never learned to count without great trouble.

Mouchette's shrill little voice was often raised in a tragi-comic despair over his stupidity.

"Dieu, qu'il est étonnant, ce garçon! C'est à la fois un génie et une bête!" And Violett, delighting in his new-found pastime of teasing her, would repeat her words most accurately, and then very rapidly say them *backwards*.

He had, too, a horrible way of playing things backwards that drove her perfectly frantic.

"Oh, Stevie, you are a bad boy," Minnie told him once, not without the vaingloriousness of a "good child." Violett looked at her. He never teased her.

"I am not a bad boy, Minnie. But I do so hate all that stuff Mouchette tells me! The piano never tells *her* beautiful things, and"— He broke off. Even to Minnie he could not confide his conviction that the piano hated the lessons as much as he did.

Sometimes he stayed away from his lesson, and had to be fetched by Bayne, who in such cases invariably found him either in the water or lying very near it.

It then appeared that Violett had suddenly found it perfectly impossible to look at a piano that day. "If I did, all the color would go out of everything," he said; and Bayne, who, though still inwardly irritated by the persistence with which

he clung to his color theory, had learned the uselessness of contesting it, would sit down beside him and try to persuade him — always quite uselessly — to go back to the villa with him.

The rector was never told of these attacks of gentle insubordination. Mouchette herself would not allow it. "He is not like other children," the little old woman would say, with a wise shake of her head. "He is above *us* all, and we must give him time. Only time will cure him of his divine foolishness, and only time can ripen that most delicate fruit, genius."

Once, while Mouchette sat waiting, gazing sadly at her apple, Minnie went with Bayne to fetch the truant. They found him on the beach, buried up to his chin in the hot sand, his small face looking very strange, thus apparently bodiless.

"I will not come, Mr. Bayne," the head said gently.

"Oh, Stevie, *please*," put in Minnie.

And Violett came, as he had never since the first day refused her anything.

The lesson was, however, a dreadful failure, so that Minnie never again was allowed to influence her playmate.

Thus the summer passed by. It was a beautiful summer.

XIII

THE first of October it rained, and the Baynes went away.

Violett walked with them to Barnfield, where they took the train, and then, having been kissed by them all in turn, and having nearly choked the señora, he watched the train out of sight and went slowly back.

Back over the sandy road through the slant rain; back past the dear cottage, where Mrs. Binns, grim of visage, was slamming the shutters to as he passed; back to the beach, the sand of which was beaten by the rain to a darker color; back in the clumsy old boat to the island; back to the lonely old days, and to the Adamses.

Old Agnes watched the child a little anxiously for a few days as he sat quietly in his corner, house-bound by the pouring rain.

"He 's lonely, Michael," she said sadly, "lonely, poor child, and lonely he 's bound to be all 's life."

Michael nodded. "Ay. Me an' Bob Venn was sayin' t' other day, God's curse is on 'im."

But Agnes shook her head indignantly. "Shame on 'ee, Michael Corey. The God o' justice an'

mercy be n't goin' to curse an innocent child for what his father did. You 're an old fool!"

"Don't, Agnes! 'T was you yourself as said the boy was bound to be lonely all 'is life, — did n't 'ee, now?"

"Yes. But lonely is far from accursed, Michael. Many a man an' wumman has been lonely under God's blessing."

And Violett was lonely but for a short time. The rector's niece, Miss Rose Carstairs, the most splendid, beautiful, and perfect young lady in the world, came to live with him, and she chose Violett for her friend. The rector, who was very kind, as are so many pompous people, had allowed Mouchette to bring the boy to the rectory once in a while for a lesson on the old Erard in the drawing-room, and one misty day in late October Rose came in. She listened to poor Mouchette's martyrdom, for it was a bad day, and Violett's fingers full of mischief; and then when the little old Frenchwoman had hurried away through the yellow dusk, Rose, who had made Violett stay, had a long talk with him.

She learned all about the island, about Agnes and Michael, about the Adamses, about Minnie and the señora and Bayne.

Then she was told of the color of the keys, and understood perfectly. She understood, also, that

there is nothing in the world so splendid as the song of the sea, and even appreciated the fearful joy of playing things backward.

She was an understanding person, Violett told Agnes that evening, and understanding persons are none too many.

The winter was early and severe that year. Often Violett could not go for his lesson, but when he could, Rose kept him for an hour after it, and, quite opposed to poor Mouchette's rock-bound musical principles, helped him to play by ear, encouraging his small brown hands in their amazing winning of the keys. She was a quiet-faced girl, this understanding person, with an absent look in her clear eyes. Violett always knew that she was lonely. Once he asked her very gently, "Was your father hung too, Miss Rose?"

And she understood that, too, and kissed him, and pressed his dark head to the breast whose troubled beat he could feel.

Agnes grew more silent that winter, and more fond of standing at the edge of the cliff, gazing at the wind-blown waters.

She was a hardy old woman, and even when it was very cold a small shawl over her head was her only wrap.

The sea and the sky seemed to have for her the

greatest charm, and she would stand curiously motionless in the whirl and flutter of her skirts and her shawl, her old eyes fixed on the water or the clouds.

"You love the water, don't you, Agnes?" Violett once asked her.

"Yes. God made the water first, Vi'lett," she answered in her careful English. "'The spirit of God moved on the face of the waters.' That was before he made light. Sometimes I think that" — she broke off short.

"What do you sometimes think, Agnes?"

"Only that God's spirit rests on the water in the darkness, even now."

"At night?"

"Ay, my dearie. At night; when it 's dark."

"When the mist creeps up, Agnes, and you can see the waves underneath, — that 's like God's spirit, I think. I mean the mist is."

The old woman nodded. "Yes, Vi'lett. Always mind that whatever God does is right. Even if it hurts, it 's right."

One day when Violett was reading by the fire, and Michael was at work chopping wood, Agnes came in, her dress and her hair white with snow. Shaking the melting flakes off, she sat down in her chair, and Violett saw that she was very pale.

"What is the matter, Agnes?" he asked, taking her hard hand in his.

"Naught, Vi'lett. Night is coming, that 's a'!"

The child looked up at the big clock in the corner. "Ay. It 's nearly five o'clock. Were you out?"

"I was on the cliff. There is darkness on the face of the waters."

She spoke very quietly, but he was awed.

"Agnes, I am reading such a nice book," he said. "Shall I tell you about it?"

The old woman paused a moment before replying, and then said suddenly, "Yes. *Read* to me, dearie."

And Violet read: —

> "The sun's rim dips,
> The stars rush out,
> At one stride comes the dark;
> With far-heard whisper in the sea
> Off shot the phantom bark."

The old woman listened eagerly, at times holding up her hand and making him re-read a line or a stanza that pleased her. Once it was —

> "So lonely 't was, that God himself
> Scarce seemèd there to be."

Again: —

> "Alone, alone, all, all alone;
> Alone on a wide, wide sea."

Violett repeated the words slowly, proud of having interested Agnes, happy at seeing the contraction of pain smooth from her dear face.

"'Alone, alone, all, all alone'!" The musical beauty of the phrase held a great charm for both the old woman and the child.

They both knew loneliness, and here it was put into words in a way that brought the feeling back to them, although they sat close together by the friendly fire.

"Agnes," Violett laid down the book and leaned his chin in his hands, "I am not lonely really, I suppose, but I feel lonely in my inside."

"That 's where loneliness is, Vi'lett, — I be here on t' island for fifty years, and I never was alone until — now."

"And why are you now?"

"Ay, why? Because God wills it, dearie."

The child was silent for a moment, and then he said slowly, the peculiarly flexible play of his lips distinct in the firelight, "It 's like a great black bird, Agnes. First it is high up in the light, an' then it comes lower and lower, and its black wings shut out all the rest" —

"Yes. Great black wings." She rose suddenly.

"Now I am going out, Vi'lett; you bide here by the fire."

The old woman caught up her shawl, drew it

over her head, and went out into the dusk. Time and time again this happened.

Violett grew accustomed to her restlessness, and with childhood's quiet acceptance of the inexplicable watched this new phase of her character in silence.

Often he found her standing at the edge of the cliff gazing seaward with a strange expression in her old eyes. He, too, loved the great gray waters the better when they were tossed heavenwards by the wind, and the heavy splash of the breaking waves below gave him a little shiver of delight.

Michael's old joints were stiff with rheumatism that winter, so that he groaned very audibly when he walked. Agnes's youthful immunity from such ills was a source of something like impatience in him, and once when he complained of their unequal fates, the old woman looked at him with a smile so beautiful that tears rushed to the watching Violett's eyes.

"Yes, Michael, thou be rheumaticky, and I be --well. God's will, old man."

One night a terrible storm blew in from the sea, and Violett could not sleep. He was not afraid, for he loved the roar of the wind, but it kept him awake, and he lay warm in his bed, listening, as he thought, to the cold outside.

At dawn he heard a door open quietly, and hushed footsteps. Then it was day and he could get up. Hurrying into his clothes, the child felt his way to the kitchen, but no one was there; on the hearth lay last night's ashes. It was still too dark to see the clock, so he lit a candle, and climbing up on a chair, held it close to the brass face of the old timepiece. Six o'clock. Then Michael or Agnes was up. The boy opened the door and looked into the tempestuous morning.

It was gray, — the bare garden, the low, torn sky, the very wind. And at the edge of the cliff stood Agnes.

Violett went across the hard grass to her, but she did not hear him.

" ' Alone, alone, all, all alone,' " she said slowly, and then again, " ' All, all alone.' "

Her hands, close wrung, were pressed to her breast; her eyes were closed. Something in her face frightened the child.

" ' All, all alone ' ! " He caught at her arm. "No, no, Agnes, not alone," he cried anxiously; "I am here."

For a moment she did not speak, while the set lines in her face changed and softened. Then, opening her eyes very wide, and taking his hand in hers, she answered slowly, "Ay, Vi'lett, thou 'rt right. *Not* all alone. God is there — his spirit on

the face of the waters — and thou — Now, dearie, lead me back to the house, for I cannot see. I am blind."

Violett learned a great deal that winter; he learned to do all those things that Agnes could no longer do. He learned to make bread — all but the mixing and kneading; he it was who measured and sifted the flour, prepared the yeast, and when Agnes had done her part, he put the dough into the pans, and he it was who decided when the baking was complete. He mended socks and garments, grotesquely at first, and then — for he was deft-fingered — neatly enough. He scrubbed the floors and built the fires, and between times he read poetry to the blind woman, whom he hardly pitied, for she never pitied herself.

The days passed. Michael's joints unstiffened, as did the lumpy earth in the garden, and Violett's arms and legs were too long for his clothes, and the water grew blue, and the sun yellow, and birds sang.

Spring had come down that way.

XIV

THERE are days in childhood that are full to the brim of splendor,— days when the sky is as blue as a great flower, and the air as fragrant as if it were indeed a giant violet bending over the green earth; days when one is so happy that one's voice thrills like a bird, and one must turn somersaults and sing loudly, and hug the people one loves, and even these delightful methods of expression prove inadequate.

Such a day was the twentieth of June to Violett. He rose early, and after helping Agnes make an unnaturally exquisite breakfast, ate his share with a face so brilliant with delight that even old Michael noticed it, and asked him what was the matter.

"Nothing, Michael," the boy answered, his voice vibrating, "I am just so glad about — about everything."

"Glad Mrs. Patch is away, dearie, and you don't have to go for a lesson?"

Agnes smiled gently at him; she fully sympathized with his dislike of his music lessons.

"I was n't thinking of that, Agnes. It 's just everything, you know."

"You 're a good boy, Vi'lett," Michael said, as he rose from the table, laying his hand on the child's shoulder.

Violett rested his cheek against the hand that loved him.

After breakfast, when the dishes were washed and the kitchen set in order, he ran down the path to the beach, and flinging himself upon his back, kicked his long legs joyfully in the air until he was too tired to move, and lay in a delicious fatigue, listening to the clear sound of the little waves breaking on the sand.

And suddenly all the Adamses came and sat down beside him. He had not seen them for months; he had not thought of them, but they were too kind to reproach him. Every one was kind, that day, just as everything was beautiful. They had not changed, they had not grown, they were just as they had always been, and he loved them.

"Do you hear the waves?" he asked them. "Do you hear the lovely green sound?"

And they heard. He sang them the Song of the Sea, and they could hear it in the measured beat of the waves at their feet. They were very intelligent and sympathetic, the Adamses.

At length it grew so warm that they all decided to go in swimming, and undressed hastily, — Mr. and Mrs. Adams and all the rest, and Violett.

The water was cool, but smooth and delicious, and they licked their chins to taste the salt.

Then, suddenly, came a splendid idea to them: they would swim around the island. And they did it, pausing now and then to rest on a rock — for Violett dared not, for fear of cramp, overtire himself — or on a spit of sand, but proud of their strength and the speed of their progress through the water. Sophia, as the youngest, swam by Violett, who helped her now and then, and gave her little short orders, such as "Look out for that rock, Sophia," or called to her, "Tell me when you 're tired, dear."

At last the party reached the rocks below the Cradle, and climbed carefully up over the slippery spikes between them and it. Then, with a sigh of content, they rested.

Bob Venn, drawing near in his boat, shaded his eyes with his broad hand. "What 's that on they rocks?" he asked. "Looks like" —

His companion, Mr. Barton, the lawyer, turned. "The sun is blinding — it looks like a dog. Have they a white dog on the island?"

Venn burst into a loud laugh, and swung his boat to the right.

"It 's Vi'lett, Mr. Barton — the lad himself, an' naked as he coom into the world!"

Violett, seeing the boat, rose and stood at the edge of the Cradle. "Bob! Bob Venn! It 's me! Stop, an' I 'll swim out to 'ee!"

Venn hesitated. "Better send him back to t' house, eh, Mr. Barton? You 'll want to see old Michael?"

Barton shook his head. "Indeed I do not want to see old Michael, nor his wrong-headed wife. Let the boy swim to us, Venn."

So Violett scrambled down to the water and struck out, laughing, towards the boat. Venn dragged him over the gunwale.

"Here 's Mr. Barton, Vi'lett. He wants to see you."

Violett pushed the over-long hair out of his face, and turned, his under lip pushed out thoughtfully.

"Mr. Barton?"

"Yes. I — you don't remember me, Violett, but I — I am your man of business."

"Oh!" The boy had remembered, and the sky had lost its blue.

"I 'm cold, Bob. Give me something to wrap up in."

Venn gave him his coat, and a minute later Barton was explaining carefully, — choosing his words. He was a kind man, and the look in Violett's eyes hurt him.

"Then — you mean," the boy said at length,

drawing Venn's coat closer over his breast, "that I have £10,000, and you think I ought to — take it?"

"No, no, not take it. But you are — how old?"

"I am eleven."

"Just so. And you are not at school. You ought to learn something. Your father was an educated man" —

"I am learning — I am learning music." The boy turned away. Then after a long pause he let the others see his face again.

"Mr. Barton — I never quite understood — please tell me. It — the money — was — Alice's?"

"Yes."

"And it is mine now?"

"Yes. Your cousin was the only child of her dead parents, — there is no one but you. You are the last Maule."

"And I ought to go to school, Mr. Barton? I can't go to school. The — the others won't have me. They won't play with me, — they *can't*, you see, because my father" — He broke off short.

Barton was touched. "I know. But there are other schools, where — they would not know — and you could learn — It is very sad, the whole story, but you are young, and when all is said and done, the money is yours."

Violett hesitated. He could go away and learn;

people would not know; other boys would play with him —

Then Bob Venn said, drawing in his oars with a loud noise, "Vi'lett, lad, you can't touch that money. You *can't!* It's blood-money!"

And Barton protested in vain.

Violett saw suddenly, as clearly as he saw the sun on the water, that he could never touch the money. And his shame rose up again and overwhelmed him.

"No, I can't take it! I can't! I mustn't go to school! I mustn't learn! Other boys" — He flung off the coat, rose, stood a minute at the edge of the boat, and then without another word jumped overboard, and swam off.

Barton blew his nose angrily. "You are a fool, Venn! A meddling, harmful fool!"

"A fool I may be, but I weren't harmful, Mr. Barton. I was right. He must bear his burden — we has all a burden — and no man can help him, but clean hands is stronger than dirty ones!"

Violett swam slowly back to the beach. The Adamses were gone. Everything was gone. He was cold, and his soul ached.

He was the boy whose father had been hanged; and he must always be that boy. Some day he would be the man whose father had been hanged.

Only the Adamses loved him, and they, he told himself with mournful truth, were not real people. Minnie Bayne did not love him; she loved a boy who was not a real boy, — she loved Stevie Adams, and he was Violett Maule.

XV

"Vi'lett!"

Violett looked up. Venn had rowed in near to the beach, and sat smiling at him.

"Hello, Bob!"

It was July now, and Violett was reading in the shade of a rock.

Venn's face was full of mystery. "Come," he said, "undress and swim out to me, Vi'lett. I be come to fetch 'ee."

Violett rolled up his trousers to his hips, and waded out. "To fetch me?" he asked, his small, dark face aglow, as he stepped into the boat.

"Yes, Vi'lett. Sea-Urchin is let again."

The boy's eyes darkened. "Is it?" he asked, with an indifference that struck Venn as pathetic.

"Yes. It 's they Baynes, Vi'lett."

"Oh!"

"Yes. I met the man an' the little gal, and they asked me where you be. They called you" —

"I know, Bob, — 'Stevie Adams.'" There was a lump in the boy's throat. "They — think that 's my name. Bob, did they want to see me?"

"Ay, that they did. And here be I come to fetch 'ee."

The boat turned the corner of the island, and

on the long narrow beach on the mainland two figures were to be seen.

"I told 'em," Venn went on almost fiercely, "that you 're a good boy, Stevie Adams, and that I 'll bring 'ee every day and fetch 'ee in t' evening — me or mother. The name don't make any difference, Vi'lett. Folks is fools that 'd blame 'ee for — for *that*. You did n't do it, an' you be a good boy. Never mind about t' name. Let them call you Stevie Adams."

"But, Bob, I am bigger now — and it is a lie."

Bob slowly uttered an oath, that was not registered against him.

"Some lies is better than some truths, Vi'lett. Thou 's Stevie Adams to them, an' God won't mind. Here we be."

The boat had reached the beach, and just out of reach of the waves stood Minnie Bayne and her father.

The minute he had joined them and kissed Minnie, Violett forgot all about his name, and became almost drunk with joy. Bayne, who looked worse than he had the year before, and was very hoarse, was kind and cordial to the boy, and Minnie, in a rose-covered hat, angelic.

Bayne sat down under an umbrella, and with a word of warning to Violett not to let Minnie get wet, went to sleep, leaving the whole world empty

but for the two children. They looked at each other, soberly shy, and Minnie told the events of the past year.

She had been on tour, and had several new "acts" which were greatly admired. Her mother had sung at the "Crown Prince," and had a new silver gown. Father had been ill, and once in the middle of a song his voice had suddenly given out. It was very dreadful, but he was better now. Stevie had grown.

Violett listened a little absently. The perfect beauty of Minnie dazed him. Her lips were redder than ever, her skin whiter, her hair longer, and the shadows about her eyes deeper. She had not grown, but she was thinner, and he thought that a fat angel would be a horrid anachronism.

He was so happy that from time to time a shiver crept over him. Only one thing distressed him, — the lie about his name. If she only knew! She was so good, so perfect, she surely would not mind. *She* would know that it was not his fault.

And then he would be happy — perfectly happy! The year before he had not minded, it had hardly seemed a lie to him; but now he knew better, and there was a spot on the sun of his bliss.

"Minnie," he began suddenly, "there is a boy who lives near here whose — whose father — was hanged."

Minnie nodded. "I know. Some one told mother. They thought *you* were the boy. Widiculous! Ma said her daughter don't play with caviminal's children."

"Would n't your mother *let* you play with a — a caviminal's child?"

Violett had never heard the word "criminal" in his life.

"Not me!" Miss Bayne rose and shook her curls with a new air. "Ma says we 're poor, but we 're artists, and — I *could n't* play with that boy. I 'd be afraid."

Violett's heart sank. "He would n't hurt you, Minnie," he faltered.

"Oh, never mind that awful ca-veature, Stevie, let 's run to the rocks."

And they raced to the rocks, and she won and was happy.

Bayne asked Violett to go to Sea-Urchin Cottage with them for dinner; and as Bob Venn had promised to tell Agnes where he was, the boy accepted gratefully, and the three waded down the sandy road under a blazing sun, tired and silent.

The señora, most lovely in a peacock blue plush garment, was very gracious. Since her success in the London Halls her manner had become a trifle more magnificent, but as she explained to Violett, a friend is a friend, be 'e hever so 'umble.

At dinner she drank beer, and under its enlivening effects became most motherly, and cried as she told Violett that she too had once had a boy, — her hangel Reginald. Violett looked like her hangel Reginald, it appeared, and sharper than a serpent's tooth —

Bayne laughed shortly at this point, which Violett thought disagreeable.

Minnie ate quietly during the ensuing discussion. She seemed used to tears on her mother's part and disgusted shrugs on her father's.

After dinner, as the two children sat in the garden eating apples, Violett asked suddenly, "Minnie, why was your father so cross?"

"I don't know. He 's often cross."

"But — the señora was so — so beautiful!"

Minnie laughed. "How funny you are, Stevie! Ma always talks about my brother when she 's been drinking beer. His name was Sam."

And all these things Violett pondered, — on Minnie, on the señora, and on Bayne. He loved the señora, for she knew, as he believed, his real name and yet was kind to him. He loved Minnie because she was Minnie and he was Violett.

Bayne, with his hoarse voice and sarcastic speeches to the splendid señora, the boy had always been half afraid of; and this year scenes and quarrels between the man and his wife were so

frequent and so hideous to the gentle child, that his mild dislike for Bayne grew to something approaching hatred. For if they quarreled, it was of course not the señora's fault, but Bayne's. It was even in some curious way his fault when his wife scolded him because he had lost his voice and could no longer sing.

Children are not logical, and the señora having won Violett's heart through her lazy kindness and what he believed to be her beauty, he unreservedly took sides with her in her quarrels with her husband. He was even perfectly sure that if by any evil chance Bayne should learn that he was the boy whose father was hanged, Minnie would no longer be allowed to play with him.

One evening when the children had been playing on the beach, it began to rain, and they went to the cottage. The house door was open, and they entered hand in hand, without knocking. On the threshold they stood still, Minnie with a little shrug of disgust, Violett with a terror that stiffened his muscles to stone.

Bayne held his wife by the shoulders, and was silently shaking her with all his force, — her big body, in its loose, dingy gown, helpless in his grasp.

Violett saw his face and uttered a little cry; then as the man turned, the boy jumped forward

and caught his arm. "Let go!" he screamed; "let go! You are *killing* her!"

Bayne laughed. "*You* let go, you little fool! Clear out!"

The señora sobbed out something unintelligible; and feeling his helplessness, Violett dropped the thin arm he was clutching, and doubling up his hand, struck the man with all his force. Bayne let go, and with a gurgling laugh the señora stumbled to her knees, swayed a minute, and then fell face downward to the floor, where she lay motionless.

Bayne looked at her for a minute, a frown of pain on his pale forehead.

"Minnie! Minnie!" stammered Violett, "She 's dead! He 's killed her!"

Then Bayne laughed aloud, and Violett, turning, saw Minnie's small face and shoulders expressing a mild disgust.

"She 's not dead, Stevie," the man said gently. "And — you need n't have struck me in the wind!"

Violett shuddered. "I — am sorry, Mr. Bayne, only" — He looked a little wildly around, and then at the inert woman on the floor.

"Mrs. Bayne is all right; you need n't worry. She — has been drinking, that 's all."

And the mighty disgust that lies in most men for the woman who has been drinking sent a hot,

sickening flush up the boy's face, and he drew back towards the door.

Minnie took a red silk pillow from the sofa, and kneeling by her mother raised her head and shoved the pillow under it. Then she rose and left the room without speaking.

Outside, the rain fell heavily; it was almost dark in the small room. Bayne sat down and leaned his head on his pale hands.

Suddenly Violett sobbed.

"And I struck you — in the wind!"

The man gave a short laugh. "You did indeed, but never mind. I 'm only sorry that you came in."

Violett went close to him.

"Mr. Bayne — I — I must tell you. My name is Violett Maule; I am the boy whose father was hung."

Bayne looked up. "I know, Stevie — I 've always known. Don't you tell — *them*, though."

The boy could not speak for a minute, and then, stooping, he kissed Bayne's thin hand.

"You knew? And you did n't mind?"

"Not I. *You* ain't to blame. But don't tell them."

"She — I mean — the señora knows."

"Dooloars knows?" Bayne shook his head. "No, she don't — nor Min."

This was such a surprise that Violett hardly knew how to readjust his ideas. So it was Bayne who knew and did not mind, and the señora, who was disgusting, did *not* know.

And he had hurt Bayne. He bent again and kissed Bayne's hand, his eyes full of tears.

"Please forgive me," he murmured, and then rushed out into the rain.

XVI

During the long months when Sea-Urchin Cottage was vacant, Violett's music lessons took place at the rectory, in the old schoolroom where Rose Carstairs had passed so much of her solitary childhood.

The piano, a very ancient and unmelodious one, stood between two seaward-looking windows, and it was very hard for the boy to fix his mind on the unsympathetic subject of counting while the sea yonder seemed to call to him.

Rose Carstairs often came in and sat listening, and on these occasions the work went better. There was between the young girl and the little boy one of those beautiful understandings that sometimes grow up between two people destined to be misunderstood by the world. Violett, always ready to love as he was, felt instinctively that the quiet-eyed lady listened to him with her heart.

And on the days when the rector bade his protégé come into the drawing-room and give a modest exhibition of his musical accomplishments on the splendid old Erard, the child involuntarily tried to forget the uninspiring presence of his pompous benefactor, and to play exclusively to Miss Rose.

"Now, Violett, show me what progress you have made since I last heard you play," Mr. Winnock would say, and Violett, telling himself seriously, with mental pressure, so to say, "*He* is not here; only Miss Rose and me are here," would begin.

First, with a curiously grim face and deep lines of determination about his mouth, he played his scales — usually badly. Then he played a "morceau." His morceaux were usually the epitome of vulgarity in composition, and he hated them. They, too, went clumsily, impatiently. After them came a short pause, while the rector admired the morceau, and mildly regretted the inadequacy of its interpretation, and Rose went on sewing, a smile on her lips.

"Now, Violett, play to us," the girl always said, at length, and Violett would play. He played all sorts of things, — French nursery songs reluctantly played to him by Mouchette and turned into exquisite works of art by his sense of harmony, scraps of things Bayne had played him, songs that Bob Venn sang as his boat flew across the water, old lullabies that Agnes had crooned to him, hymns. Then he caricatured, a gleam in his eyes, the things he had played, turning "Au Clair de la Lune" to a waltz, and "Malbrouck" to a minor dirge. These things delighted the rector, and Rose listened patiently.

Usually it was afternoon when Violett made his visit, and until five the rector was what he called "busy" in his study behind closed doors.

Therefore by the time the boy came to that part of his modest exposition that he loved, the westering sun came in at the long windows, painting strange creeping shadows on the old oak floor, drawing wonderful tints from the faded satin of the furniture, and spinning, like a great golden spider, a splendid web of reality and imagination over the lovely, delicately faded room.

And Violett, his thin legs hanging down from the stool, his head thrown back, let his hands lie on the piano, while it sang to him. This is what it seemed to the boy. And always, every time, the Song of the Sea came, and was listened to reverently, for was it not the first song that had come to him?

Years after, Rose Carstairs wrote to a friend a description of one of these afternoons. "His face was to me the most beautiful thing in the world, while he played. His mouth, always innocently plaintive, had then something like the shadow of a smile on it, and his big eyes, half closed, were homes of melody. About the color theory, I do not know what to say. It is for me nonsense, but it is a 'divine nonsense,' as poor Mouchette used to say, and Violett believed in it as you and I do

in the gospel. He thought he could hear color, and however that may be, it is certain that his sense of hearing was marvelously acute. And even in those days I could half believe that the piano did, as he seriously insisted, 'tell him things,' only he should have said 'sang him things,' for it sang under his little brown hands in a most wonderful way."

And as the little brown hands wooed the keys, the good rector listened, much pleased with his pupil. Then Rose gave Violett a kiss and a cup of tea with much cake, and the boy went slowly, the tips of his fingers still cool and sensitive to the feeling of the ivory, to Bob Venn's cottage.

If Venn was not at home, he waited, sitting silently on the doorstep, watching the sea and listening to Bob's old mother as she tripped about the kitchen preparing supper.

"Well, Vi'lett, did you play?" the big fisherman invariably asked, as he took up his oars, and Violett as invariably answered, "Yes, Bob, I played."

The short passage to the island was usually a silent one, and when he had said good-night to his kind friend, the boy sped up the steps to the lighthouse, his eyes still alight with the beauty of music.

XVII

THE summer when Violett was nearly thirteen, Bayne came alone to the island. The señora and Minnie were, he told Violett, at work touring, but he was too ill, and had come again for the sea air. He was too poor to go to a hotel or an inn, and as he hated to be quite alone, he wanted to know whether Violett would rent him a room for a small sum for two months.

"I 'll ask Michael," the boy answered eagerly. "I am sure they will."

Bayne smiled. "You need n't ask them," he said, "everything on the island except the light itself belongs to you."

But Violett asked Agnes, nevertheless, and she agreed at once, glad to have some one with whom Violett could talk.

"They say that folks as is blind from birth can see with their fingers, sir," she said, when the boy proudly brought his friend to her, "but I cannot. You have been kind to Vi'lett, I know. Surely you will never be unkind to him or to us."

And Bayne promised. He was hoarser than ever and thinner, his long, bent nose gleaming with a curious whiteness against the yellow of his face. He would never be able to sing again, he told Vio-

lett, but he hoped to get a position as clown in a circus.

"My voice will make 'em laugh," he said, with a bitter smile, "and my legs, too."

Violett had no social prejudice against clowns as clowns, but he feared the work would be too fatiguing for his friend, and said so.

"No, no. Charley Massey, the proprietor, is a friend of mine, so I 'll get on."

"And — Minnie — and the señora?"

They were sitting together on the little beach at the foot of the path, Bayne lying comfortably in a hole Violett had dug for him in the warm sand.

"Minnie 's got a voice and sings now; Dooloars is back at the musical game. Minnie will get on, — she 's very pretty."

Day after day the two sat together in the sand, and as time went by, Violett told his friend about the Adamses, about his Somedays, about the books he read in the winter. And then Bayne told him that people could read in the summer, too, — a fact Violett had never realized.

After that, the future clown led the blind woman every day down the path, and Violett read aloud to them.

Agnes liked the man, and was happy that he liked Violett. Bayne's light eyes, with their look of pain, used to study the old woman's quiet face

as she listened to the boy's voice, and the bitter lines about his mouth smoothed away.

"I am happy here," he said one day, as Violett ran up the path for a drink of water.

"Yes; there 's God's quiet here," the old woman returned.

"I don't believe in God, Agnes."

"Poor man, poor man!"

Bayne looked at her. "Why don't you ask me not to put such ideas into Violett's head?"

She laughed. "No, no. I 'm not afraid of that, Mr. Bayne. You 're not a bad man."

The summer was a golden one, full of still mornings and long, fragrant afternoons. Bayne grew stronger, and even went in swimming once or twice.

One evening when he and Violett were alone, the man began, with something in his voice that caused Violett to look at him quickly, "Violett, did you ever hear of the Goths?"

No, Violett did not know whether they were people or things.

"They were a people, a great people," Bayne went on. "They conquered Italy and Rome and — they were *heroes*. Big blond brave men, Violett, who were never hoarse and never tired — they were heroes."

"Oh, tell me about them."

"Yes. Well, — I am writing a play about them, Violett, and — I will read it to you." There was a curious proud timidity in his manner, as of one who is used to being laughed at.

Violett was enchanted, interested, full of confidence, the best listener one could wish. Bayne read the play himself, lingering over the places he considered good, explaining the merits, deprecating the faults.

He had chosen Totila, the blond king, as his hero, beginning with his coronation and ending — the end was merely blocked out — with his burial in Numa Pompilius's tomb. The play was long, clumsily constructed, and halting, but full of rough poetry, and written in a spirit of adoration for the beautiful, successful, betrayed hero that touched Violett, he did not know why.

Bayne had once hoped to play the rôle of the king himself, but long ago he had given up the idea, and now his wish was to finish the play and sell it to Arthur Wauchope, the great actor-manager.

"It is sure to be a hit," Bayne said confidently, and Violett believed him.

After that evening, Bayne wrote every day for an hour or more, and then read aloud what he had accomplished. It was a happy time, and when Bayne went away, bearing a shy greeting to Min-

nie from Violett, he promised to come back the next summer.

The next summer Violett waited eagerly all through June, July, and August, but no one came, and no letter. Only early in September a big package of books, — "Rob Roy," "The Scottish Chiefs," "Pendennis," "Oliver Twist," "King Lear," and Keats's poems.

All through the autumn and winter the boy studied his new books, learning pages by heart, reading aloud to Agnes, shedding understanding tears over poor little Oliver, and following, with the unresentful sorrow with which he met his own wrongs, the history of the poor old king. There was a melody that came to him whenever he read Lear, that grew to be the expression of the old man's tragedy to him and to Rose Carstairs.

One day, when he had been playing it to the young girl, she said to him suddenly, "Violett, some one is coming here to-morrow. It is Sonnenthal, the great pianist. You know, I told you about him."

The boy nodded. "I remember — the little man with the big soul, the one you love."

She started.

"Oh, Violett! How do you know?"

"I know. Is he coming here? Then that is why you are so happy."

Rose bent and kissed him. "Yes, he is coming. And he will play. Only — you must n't say that I love him."

"Very well, I won't, if you don't," he answered.

It was a pity that no one was there to see the beauty of her eyes as she answered loyally, "I *do*, Violett, but you must n't say it. Oh, yes, I *do!*" After a moment she added, her hand on the boy's shoulder, "You must come some afternoon and hear him play. He will help you to — *hear music.*"

"No one can help me. I must just wait," he returned, his arms folded, his heavy brows drawn down over his eyes.

A phrase from the "Imitation" came into the girl's head as she watched him: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

The boy's attitude of patient receptiveness struck her as it had never done. He was a cup held reverently for the heavens to fill.

A day or two later, Violett was shown into the drawing-room at the rectory, to find Sonnenthal at the piano, playing. Miss Carstairs did not see the child, nor did the great man. Violett stood in the doorway, and as the music went on, he dropped to the rug in his favorite cross-legged attitude. The little man at the piano, with his large nose and indigo chin, disappeared; Rose, with her closed eyes,

melted away; there was no room, no piano, nothing but a forest, in the centre of which a great soft cataract tumbled over smooth, mossy stones; and on the edge of the pool into which it fell, ferns and forget-me-nots grew.

And then the river flowed on, through lush green fields, under a blue sky, under brown bridges where the shadows were deep, on and on to the sea; and when it had reached the sea nestled into its endless waters as softly as a baby into its warm bed. Then that was the end, and Violett remembered, in the bareness of the silence, that he had been hearing music.

"Thank you," said Rose Carstairs, very gently. The man with the blue chin rose and came to her.

"It was beautiful?" he asked, "beautiful?"

"Rose," he went on, taking her hand and holding it in his, "I love you."

She did not speak, but she looked up.

"And you — love me."

Then she said, "Yes, I have always loved you."

Violett listened most innocently. It was a part of the beauty of life, — her face and the man's voice.

"If you marry me," Sonnenthal went on, still holding her hands, "you will not be happy. I am not the man to make his wife happy."

"I do not ask to be happy, Félix."

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"From that day, two years ago, I have known that we loved each other, Rose. But I have tried to keep away. Then — the other day, I could no longer do so, and I came. When will you marry me?"

"Whenever you like."

He kissed her hands, and leaving her, went hurriedly to the piano and began to play.

Violett listened, his eyes like silver lamps in the dark. It was a rushing, overwhelming music, this, sweeping away obstacles, hurting people, hurting itself; it was a flood or a fire. It hurt the child too, in some way he did not understand. He wanted to rush in and rescue Miss Rose, yet even then he knew that he could not, — that she could not be helped. He rose to his knees, and crept away into the hall and down into the winter evening.

The following day Sonnenthal went back to London. "Where is your genius?" he asked, as Rose drove him to the station.

"Violett? Ah, yes — he did not come — he is a queer child!"

XVIII

VIOLETT was at the little church the bleak, dark morning when Rose Carstairs was married to Félix Sonnenthal. The child rarely went to church. It was quite three miles inland; and since the beginning of her blindness old Agnes had had such a fear of the water that she had gradually given up leaving the island, and Michael had never been a church-goer.

So the boy looked around the little old building with a feeling of strangeness, while he waited, shivering, for the bride to come in.

Agnes's simple piety and perfect familiarity with the Bible had taught him most of the best of religion, but very little of form. It surprised him that people should kneel in prayer. His instinct was to stand, his body drawn to its full height, his head thrown back face to face with God.

"I should kneel if I were ashamed," he thought, "and I am not ashamed."

When the short ceremony was over, and the bride and groom stood in the vestry waiting for the carriage, Mrs. Sonnenthal caught sight of her favorite at the door, and sent for him.

"Félix, this is Violett Maule," she said, — almost the first words she said to her husband.

Sonnenthal took Violett's hand and looked at him.

"You can play the piano?" he asked.

"Yes."

"You can distinguish tones and notes by ear?"

"Yes."

"You — love music?"

"Yes."

Sonnenthal looked at the boy's hand with curious intentness, turned it over, moved the flexible wrist, bent back the supple first joints, and studied the strong little thumbs with a leisure that was rather resented by some of the people standing near.

"Who is it?" asked Sir Capel Berkeley, the greatest landowner of the neighborhood, of Mrs. Pinckney, who put up her gold glass and examined the great musician and the poorly dressed child with careless scrutiny.

"I don't know, I'm sure," she returned audibly. "Oh, yes, I do; it's the lighthouse boy, Maule's son. You remember about Maule's murdering his niece — always such a nice, civil man — I was quite shocked."

Violett heard.

He drew his hand away from Sonnenthal's and slipped quietly through the door into the churchyard.

His mother was buried there, close to a hedge now bare and brown.

Violett could not remember his mother, and he had never missed her. Agnes had been a mother in all but fact to him.

Now, however, he sat down by the grave, with its slanting mossy stone, and cried.

Five years had passed, and yet people did not forget. And he knew that people never would forget.

XIX

A FEW months after Rose Carstairs's marriage Mouchette died, and the music lessons came to an end. Mr. Winnock, whose health, though quite satisfactory to his friends, was considered by himself to be failing, went to Italy for the winter, and in his absence the pianos were locked, as a protection against the curate's children, so that Violett had no piano on which to play.

And the loneliness of mind and hands when deprived of the bow or the keys!

The boy was very unhappy at first; he awoke night after night from blissful dreams to find his fingers positively aching for the cool touch of the smooth ivory.

At first the color of all sounds faded for him to a dull neutral tint that was a gray to his ears, and he sat for hours in the cold wind trying to hear the color of the waves breaking.

Agnes was anxious about him.

"He 's growin' too fast, Michael," the old woman said once, "and he 's just aching for music."

"All nonsense, a lightkeeper's boy iver to have had lessons, anyhow!" Michael answered gruffly, but his eyes followed Violett's languid figure with concern, nevertheless.

Gradually, Time did his work.

The hours in the rectory drawing-room grew less painfully vivid. The boy's hands forgot the haunting coolness of the keys, and the sound of the sea was sea-color once more.

The winter passed and spring blossomed into summer. One June day Violett sat in the Cradle, listening to a splendidly rhythmical march that the sea was singing to him.

It was a glorious, golden morning, full of the joy of life, and the air throbbed with music.

When Bob Venn's boat appeared Violett called to him, his voice vibrating with the instinctive delight of youth in spring, "Hello, Bob, — is n't it all beautiful!"

Venn waved his hand, with something white in it.

"A letter for you, Vi'lett — from London!"

It was the boy's first letter.

Slipping out of his clothes he crawled down — his supple little body white against the moss, brown in the blue water — and swam out to the boat. The letter was addressed by Bayne, but inside it was a second envelope on which some one had written "Stevie."

Violett flushed with excitement.

"It — it must be from her!" he said breathlessly.

But there was no letter. Instead it was a photograph.

The picture represented the little girl in tights and a short pleated skirt, her hair hanging below her waist in ringlets. Violett never forgot that moment: Bob Venn leaning on his oars and smiling kindly, he himself sitting naked in the stern, and Minnie's little pleased face smiling up at him from the photograph.

The next event in the child's life was a very different one.

Rose Sonnenthal and her husband came back to the rectory once, to visit the rector, who was to give up his living and had returned to make the necessary arrangements; and the young woman sent for her protégé to come to see her.

Violett, coming into the drawing-room, beaming with happiness, stopped short as he saw the pale face turned to welcome him from the fireside. There was tragedy and sorrow in the atmosphere, and his painfully sensitive nature felt it at once.

Sonnenthal, who was at the piano, nodded good-naturedly to the boy without stopping his playing, and Violett, going quickly to Mrs. Sonnenthal, stood looking at her and her baby, without a word.

"Hello! So you are our friend the genius!"

The music had ceased.

"I am Violett Maule."

"The boy I saw in the vestry. You have grown."

Violett did not answer. His eyes were fixed quietly on the speaker's face.

"Violett — why don't you answer?"

The nervous anxiety in Rose Sonnenthal's voice told the whole story. She was afraid of her husband.

"Yes, I have grown."

Sonnenthal was in a radiant humor. Calling the boy to him, he laid one hand on his thin young shoulder and talked to him.

"Can you play?"

"Yes, I can play."

"Have you worked hard?"

"No, Mouchette is dead, and — Mr. Winnock was away."

"But you hear sky-blue sea music, and red-poppy-in-the-corn music?"

"Don't tease him, Félix dear!" Rose came and stood by them.

At length, still jocose, the great man rose, and shoving Violett into his place, told him to play.

Miss Rose's pitiful face before him, Sonnenthal's recent music in his ears, Violett sat helplessly at the piano, his thin, boyish hands lying limp on the keys. Something was wrong. Miss Rose was unhappy, Sonnenthal in a bad mood. Violett could not play.

"Well, well, go on, — begin something!" the great man said impatiently, and Rose added hastily, nervously, "Yes, Violett. Do play something for the master. I have told him about you."

And Violett tried, and could not. He hated Sonnenthal; he loved Rose. His head hummed with hateful melody, that meant the little German Jew with the blue chin, and beautiful, plaintive silver-gray airs, that meant Rose.

With a hideous discord that brought a cry to his own lips, he rose, turning helplessly to Rose.

"Ach! That is your genius, my dear," said Sonnenthal, with a sneer. "You had better become a butcher of pigs and calves, Mr. Violett, than a butcher of art."

Rose bit her lip helplessly. "Oh, Violett!" she cried, as her husband left the room.

Violett caught her hand, tears rolling down his cheeks. "Miss Rose, I could n't help it! I could n't play!"

"But you used to! And I told him so much about it. I thought it would amuse him — it is so dull for him here."

Violett wiped his eyes, and bending down to her said very low and hurriedly, "I — *hate* him!"

Then he rushed from the house.

This scene often came back to him, — the strength of his reasonless dislike of the great man, who was

ready to help him; the utter impossibility of playing for that man; poor Rose Sonnenthal's sad face —

He did not go again to the rectory. The old longing for a piano had come back to him, the dreams, the loneliness. There was music everywhere, only the piano was needed to develop it, and in the absence of the medium, harmony became discord.

One evening a few weeks later, Violett was sitting by the dying fire alone with Agnes, who was asleep.

He had been haunted for days by an air that would not come right, — an air full of beauty and strength, but that was hopelessly tangled and distorted in his mind. His slim hands, lying on his knees, shaped themselves unconsciously to the keyboard he was dreaming into a momentary reality; the firelight flickered on his hopeless, weary face.

For a long time there was utter silence in the room, and then looking up, the boy gave a little cry. Mr. Barton had come in and was looking at him.

A moment later, the visit was explained.

"Violett," Barton said, "I have just heard from Mrs. Sonnenthal. She wrote me a long letter about you, and asked me to come to see you."

"Did she, sir?"

"It appears that you have a great talent for music."

"I love music."

"Mrs. Sonnenthal tells me that for several years you have had lessons at the rector's expense, and showed great promise. *H'm!* Since Mrs. Patch's death, you have had no instruction, and no piano to play on. You may not know," he went on, "that though Mrs. Sonnenthal is much interested in you, she cannot give you any practical help."

Agnes flushed, and her brown hands caught each other tight. "If by practical help, sir, you mean money," she began with timid pride, "Violett needs no charity beyond that of word and thought."

"My good woman, *will* you let me finish what I have to say? Mrs. Sonnenthal has no money of her own, and I fancy from what she says, that her husband has refused to help you."

"I hate him!" said Violett tranquilly. "He is not good to her!"

"That 's as may be. Now, knowing in a vague way that you have a small fortune, and that I am your guardian, she has applied to me, and I have come to tell you that I am prepared to advance you enough money to buy yourself a piano. You can repay me when you are of age."

Violett never forgot the two faces, both turned to him, waiting for his answer.

"A piano!"

It meant so much to him.

"Violett," Agnes rose and laid her hand on his arm, "you hated the piano lessons, dearie."

"Piano lessons and a piano are very different things," commented Barton impatiently. "Pray let the boy decide for himself; he is quite old enough, and your objections to the use of the money are ridiculous."

"Yes — Agnes. I must decide for myself" — The boy hesitated for a moment. "I will go out for a little while."

"Yes. Go. And God go with you, my dearie. Remember, until to-day you are innocent in God's sight of — that which your father did. But if you partake of the money, you partake of his crime."

It was December, and the gray water was cold. Violett stood in the little cove looking seawards. It was here where he had so often played with the Adamses, — where the ocean had sung to him the night his father had paid the price of the money that was offered him now. It was here that he had first heard in full the song of the sea, his companion now for many years.

If he had a piano, all for himself, he could sit by it for hours, and it would sing to him all the inarticulate but splendid melodies that he knew, and the others, more beautiful still, which he knew

were waiting for him. It would mean a life brimful of splendor; it would mean happiness.

He would have it. He would take the money.

The feeling of the cool, smooth ivory came again to his fingers, so strongly that he looked down at them half expectantly.

Under the dull winter sky he dreamed on, and at his feet the sea sang.

It was its own splendid, rhythmical melody, — the Song of the Sea, the melody that had come to him years ago in the night.

And as the day was leaden and gray, its sound was to him leaden and gray, just as in the summer sun it was blue and flashing. The sense of harmony that was so keenly his stirred the boy's heart as he listened. The piano was to be his, and it would express to other people the music of nature that they were too dull to hear.

And then with a little sharp sound in his throat, he lay down in the chill sand, hiding his face. The color was going! Gently and relentlessly the harmonious grayness of the waves' sound was fading into a chaotic nothingness that was horrible. It was as if the sky had lost its color, and become a whirling blank above ghastly trees and inharmonious meadows.

Violett was frightened. Harmony had become discord.

And then in an instant he knew why. His was not at all a religious nature; he did not say to himself that his conscience had risen up in arms against his determination to take the money for the piano. He merely felt that to take the money was unnatural, a sin against the laws of inner harmony, and that therefore he must not do it.

Rushing up the path to the house, he announced to Barton that he would not have the piano, and opposed the man's practical arguments with an eager obstinacy so totally unlike his usual passivity as to surprise even Agnes.

"Violett, dearie," the blind woman exclaimed, when the door had closed, and she and the boy were alone, "I 'm glad — very glad! But why? What happened to change 'ee so?"

He gave a nervous shudder.

"I could n't, Agnes," he returned simply.

XX

THE line between youth and manhood is in most cases less a line than a soft encompassing mist that creeps about one until all distinctive landmarks are hidden, and one wanders on gropingly. When at last it clears away one must look backward to see familiar things, for before one lies the unknown; one's feet are set on a splendid strange path that they reached in the mist.

Violett's case was different.

He rose one day a child, and when he went to bed, childhood had gone. He had grown to be a tall, over-slight youth with thin wrists and ankles; his dark hair, burnt by the sun to a rusty brown, hung in a heavy lock over his brow. His face, thin and brown, was long, the chin pointed, and the unusually long lower lashes, shadowing his bright, gray eyes, gave him a look of delicacy.

He had read a great deal since Bayne had been at the island, and of late had discovered Keats, whom he loved to the end of his days, the best of all poets. Lonely, shut in, with literally no one with whom he could talk of his books otherwise than as an instructor, he had grown to be over-thoughtful, over-dreamy, and the exaggeration of the two qualities showed in his grave young face.

Late in the afternoon of his seventeenth birthday, the boy sat in the Cradle, his arms clasped about his knees, a book lying face down on the rock beside him.

It was the worn volume of Byron that he had found years before in his mother's little library, — worn, but with the inglorious wornness of disuse. The leaves, thin as the lining of an egg, and gilded, were gray; the bright blue of the cover had faded, but for the bright squares where smaller books had leaned for years against it. It was a mournful little book, and Violett did not love it. To-day, for the first time, he had found in it something that pleased him, and he had learned the first stanza by heart.

> "She walked in beauty, like the night
> Of cloudless climes and starry skies."

He repeated it slowly to himself, and then was silent, and thought of Minnie Bayne. He was now seventeen; that made Minnie sixteen.

> "And all that 's best of dark and light
> Meets in her aspect and her eyes."

The world was so exquisitely beautiful, and Minnie, now nearly a woman, was in it, somewhere.

In his simple thoughts Minnie's yellow hair still floated about her slight shoulders, but yet there would be a great change, and the thought of the change thrilled him to his finger-tips.

He had thought of Minnie all day, for some reason, and he loved everything.

When she came again, and she would come, he would go to her with outstretched hands, and she would lay her hands in his, and he would be happy.

He had not seen her for five years, and yet that day he fell in love with her; for his time had come, and he knew no other woman.

All the beautiful things he had ever read applied to her, even the poems of nature. She it was who "was a phantom of delight," she it was who was "like a red, red rose," whose voice was "as the bird's in May." Everything beautiful in the world was hers, and he himself was hers, and she was his.

Childhood had gone.

PART II

I

HIGH up in an old house not far from the river, in one of London's dreary, respectable poorer quarters, Jim Bayne lay in bed. The room was dark, for it was November and late afternoon, and the table lamp threw but a faint light.

Near the table the señora sat sewing, her fat back bent over her work, her untidy hair bristling with curl-papers. She had grown much older since she had been at the Sea-Urchin, and the encroaching fat, as well as worse things, was ruining her beauty. As she worked, she cast impatient glances first at the sick man, then towards the door.

"He ain't a-comin' at all, it seems," she remarked at last, and Bayne sighed.

"I told you it was nonsense, Bayne, but you was always that obstinate."

"He 'll come," ejaculated the man hoarsely. "Where 's Min?"

"Rehearsin'! D'Orsay is goin' to bring 'er 'ome."

She drew her needleful of cotton through the gay satin with a snap, and looked furtively at her husband, who, however, did not speak for several seconds. When he did, it was to say painfully, "I don't like d'Orsay, Dooloars."

"I know you don't, and it 's very silly of you. 'E 's a gentleman, and mikes 'is pound a week."

"Not a gentleman. Oh, no, not that!" He broke off to cough painfully, and she rose, and not unkindly arranging his pillows, gave him some water.

"Poor old chap, you 're breaking up fast, ain't yer?" she asked, with a mild curiosity.

He nodded. "Yes, I 'm goin' — thank Gawd. If Stevie don't come" —

Her old lazy good humor, of late such a fluctuating quantity, came back with a rush, and sitting down by him, she took his hot hand in hers, and stroked it softly.

"'E 'll come. 'E was always a good boy, Stevie, an' 'e was that fond of *me!*"

She smiled at the recollection, and meditatively pulled the curl-papers out of her hair.

"Better put some clothes on," Bayne suggested, smiling. "You ain't very fine."

A few minutes later, when Violett came in, the señora was gorgeous in a yellow, much spangled, if somewhat soiled, evening gown.

"It 's so warm," she explained with an exaggeration of her old languid grace, "that I dressed a little earlier."

Violett nodded vaguely. Bayne was dying, and he had come to say good-by. That was all he

could think of. Even Minnie was forgotten for the moment.

"I was afraid you 'd come too late, boy," the man told him, "and I 've so much to say to you. You remember my play?"

"*Do I!* Of course I do."

"Well — it 's going on. It 's going to be played this year."

Violett flushed. "Mr. Wauchope?"

"No, no. It was n't good enough for him. It 's a cheap company, not much, but it 's to be given, and that 's the chief thing. I want Totila to be good, though, Vi — Stevie. That 's why I sent for you," went on the dying man rapidly, propping himself on one elbow and gazing earnestly at the boy. "*You* must act him."

"I, Mr. Bayne? But — I can't act. I don't know how," stammered Violett.

Mrs. Bayne poured some spirits into a glass and laughed.

"Bayne 's took it into 'is 'ead that you an' no other are the man to do it. 'E says you read the lines so well."

"Oh, read! Yes, I can read, but I can't act, Señora."

Bayne reached under his pillow and drew out a ragged manuscript.

"Here, read it now, *she 's* a good judge. Read

the part where he harangues the women and children, and tells them that they must jump into the crater if the battle is lost."

The boy did not hesitate. He had known the scene by heart once, and even now it came rushing into his active memory from the recesses of that passive one where so much lies half forgotten.

He rose and stood in the middle of the untidy room, his thin shadow quivering across the floor as he moved, and repeated the lines with his simple dramatic taste, to which the warmth of his young voice lent something very touching.

> "'And you, you Gothic women, in whose arms
> Lie Gothic babies never to be men,
> Your part is this'" —

On and on it went, rough and halting verse, simply delivered, but thrilling because it held thoughts that, turned over and over in a man's heart for a lifetime, were written with emotion and truthfulness.

When he had come to the end of the scene, Violett looked up, to see tears coursing down the furrows of Bayne's face, and even splashing on the señora's yellow satin bosom. His own eyes were wet, as they traveled to the door, and there he saw Minnie; and dropping the roll of papers, he went simply toward her, both hands held out.

The young girl came in, a smile on her face. "Oh, Stevie!" she said, and gave him her small gloved hands.

It was absolute heaven, and Violett forgot everything for one second.

"Now then, now then, Min, who the deuce 's this young gent?"

The man who had come in with Minnie laid his hand on her arm, and she and Violett sprang apart.

"Now don't you be hasty," the young girl retorted, with an air of conscious coquetry. "What 's it to *you* who I shake hands with? Here, Stevie, I am *that* glad to see you!"

She smiled up at the tall boy, for she had grown but little, and in her great eyes was a mixture of two expressions, one of which delighted Violett, while the other hurt him.

"Mr. d'Orsay," broke in the señora in her most magnificent manner, "allow me to present to you Mr. Haddams, a young friend of ours — a childhood's friend of Miss Bayne."

Violett bowed, overwhelmed by the splendor of a mother's calling her daughter Miss Bayne.

Mr. d'Orsay, looking at the childhood's friend with an anything but friendly eye, melted a little as he observed the extreme poverty of the boy's clothes, the shortness of his sleeves, the cut of his

hair. "Chawmed," he murmured in the deep voice that was making his fortune as a polite villain.

Violett rudely paid no attention to him, however, but stood gazing at Minnie until Bayne interrupted his trance by suddenly, without a word of warning, fainting dead away.

When he was somewhat restored, the sick man called Violett and explained what he wished him to do.

"Mr. Chaffee, the manager, is coming in to-night, and you 're to read the rôle to him. Then he 'll take you to the theatre and you 'll see the others. Oh, Gawd, if I could only live until it 's given!"

Violett, to whom it never occurred to explain that he wished to be a lighthouse-keeper and not an actor, listened acquiescently.

If Bayne had chosen to have him climb the dome of St. Paul's, he would at once have set out to make the attempt. Bayne was Minnie's father.

Evening came, and Minnie and Mr. d'Orsay, after a light meal, went off to the theatre, the señora having already departed for her music-hall round.

Minnie, Bayne told Violett, was singing now in light comedy. Her voice was very good, and she was to have a rôle next year. As yet she was in the chorus.

Violett listened eagerly, asking a question now and then, but very quiet in his mingled happiness and sorrow. He was with Minnie again, but Bayne, who had been his friend, was dying.

"D'Orsay comes around a good bit," Bayne went on, "and I 'm sorry. I don't like him. Dooloars says he 's a gentleman, Vi'lett, but he ain't. 'E 's a *gent*, that 's what 'e is, and Lord knows that 's far from being a gentleman." He paused a moment, and then went on, "How old are you, Vi'lett — I *must n't* call you that — Stevie!"

"I 'm eighteen, Mr. Bayne. In August, you know."

Bayne sighed. "I wish you was a few years older. Like 's not she won't wait that long, or Dooloars won't let 'er."

"Wait for what, Mr. Bayne?"

"To marry, Vi'lett. Dooloars wants 'er to marry d'Orsay."

Violett pressed the palms of his hands very hard to the arms of his chair. Minnie marry d'Orsay!

"Will you let her marry me, Mr. Bayne?" he asked simply.

Bayne laughed. "You 're too young, my boy. And then you have no money."

Violett turned very pale and went to the window.

"You could n't keep a wife, could you?" The

sick man sat up in bed, his eyes bright with sudden hope.

"Keep — a wife" —

"I mean — 'ave you any money? A little would do, Stevie — just enough to live on" —

There was a star hanging low over the waste of chimney pots before him, and Violett's eyes were fixed on it.

"Would she? I mean, do you think" —

"Oh, Stevie — '*ave* you any money? This is not the life for 'er, and she was always fond of you — I — I could die 'appy."

The money was there, in Mr. Barton's hands. Formerly it had meant a piano; now it meant Minnie. The boy turned.

"I" — he began, and then suddenly he remembered the horrible tumult of the sea, that day when he had tried to take the money; the awful colorlessness of all sound; the discord of everything. "I — there is the island," he said, his voice so harsh that Bayne turned and stared at him, "but — I have no money."

II

D'Orsay used a strong scent, and the smell of it was almost unbearable to Violett. The man in every way was horrible, — his smooth black hair, his smart clothes, and his voice. The boy used to watch him with a look that was almost horror in his eyes.

Minnie, laughing, sulking, smiling at the actor, almost broke Violett's heart. Once he ventured to remonstrate.

"Minnie — I wish you would n't look at that — that man in that way."

She burst out laughing. "Wazzum jealous? Diddums want to bite the big black bowwow?" she answered, and he drew back as if she had struck him.

Mr. Chaffee, the manager of the touring company that was to produce "The Gothic King," turned surly when he learned that Adams — whom Bayne had assured him to be just the man for the title rôle of the drama — was a mere boy who had never seen the inside of a theatre in his life.

"Wait till you 'ear his voice," pleaded Bayne.

"Voice is all very well, but it takes more than that to make an actor."

Bayne sat up in bed, his thin face flushed. "There is n't one person in your company that 'as a grain of talent, Joe Chaffee, and you know it. Adams is a genius, I tell you — oh, not for acting, but better for music, an' he reads aloud to make a man sob. Wait till you 'ear 'im."

So Violett recited again the scene of the good-by, — and Chaffee listened.

The boy was no actor, but his gestures, full of his own supple grace, his utter freedom from self-consciousness, and the beauty of his voice struck the manager. When he learned that Violett, far from expecting a salary, considered Chaffee's acceptance of his service as a great favor that enabled him to give pleasure to poor Bayne, the manager melted, and Violett was accepted as one of the third-rate band of players, in which he at first believed utterly.

Chaffee had long thought that Bayne was mad, and immediately put Violett into the same interesting and sometimes profitable category.

The rehearsals of "The Gothic King" went on regularly, and some of the excitement of theatrical life crept into Violett's veins. There was a wonderful charm in the dusty darkness of the stage, while the company gathered, waiting for Mr. Chaffee; and then when the electric light was turned suddenly on, the boy's imagination saw

wonderful things in the shadows, the very heaps of scenery were full of poetry to him, and the dusky emptiness of the unlit auditorium was peopled for him by creatures of his own brain. He knew his rôle by heart at once, and soon was able to help most of the others, whispering a forgotten cue or joggling an inattentive elbow.

The other members of the company liked the tall, silent boy, always ready to do a good turn to any of them, and he soon learned that in spite of his limited years he was not unpleasing to the women and girls.

One of the latter, a little blonde with a dimple in her cheek, after making in vain several flirtatious advances to him, suddenly brought him to confusion by declaring to the assembled company, "Well, dears all, it 's up to you to congratulate Mr. Hadams. 'E 's engaged."

"To whom?"

"To me. 'E proposed last night, and very neat 'e did it, for the first time."

Violett stood still, his hands clinched tight, while the girls and one or two of the men shouted with laughter.

"Where 's your ring, Maudie?" asked one man at length.

Maudie giggled. "'E 's telegraphed to 'is guv'nor for the family jools, ain't you, Ducky?"

Violett looked at her. "If I had asked you to marry me, would it be so funny?"

He had no sense of humor, but he had dignity. They all had a rough kind of humor, but not one of them any dignity. Therefore they were impressed. They stopped laughing, and into Maud Courtenay's eyes came a look of curiosity that stayed until it changed to something else.

One evening Violett and Minnie sat by the window talking in low tones while Bayne slept. Minnie was sewing some rosettes on a pair of high-heeled satin shoes, and Violett watched her small white hands as they twisted and turned over their work.

"Minnie," the boy said at length, "are you sure you like d'Orsay?"

"Sure I like him? What a question, Stevie! Of course I 'm sure, or I 'd 'ave sent 'im about his business long ago."

"Your father does n't like him."

"I know. Poor pa 's very queer. Ma likes 'im, though, and ma knows the world. Whatever made you think of d'Orsay?"

"I think of him often, Minnie."

She looked up at him with the precocious coquetry of her kind, but beneath his steady gaze her eyes changed and fell.

"You 're a funny boy," she murmured.

"I 'm not a boy at all. I am a man."

"Then stop bothering me about d'Orsay, and say some poetry to me."

Violett hesitated for a moment, and then began, almost under his breath, to recite, —

> "Bid me to live and I will live
> Thy protestant to be."

Minnie dropped the little shoe and listened, her eyes bent on her hands.

The boy's voice, always beautiful, was as full of melody then as is a nightingale's. When he came to the words —

> "Bid me to weep and I will weep
> While I have eyes to see" —

his hearer raised her own eyes, that had seen and understood so much of evil for years, and yet were innocent, and looked at him, while her lips shook nervously, and his eyes, younger in some ways, yet full of the wisdom given by solitude, held hers until he had ceased speaking.

There was a long pause, and then Violett, laying his hand on hers, rose. "Minnie — it is n't d'Orsay," he said slowly, "it is me."

Bending, he kissed her, and when she looked up, brushing her eyes with her hand, her face was younger by years.

"Yes, Stevie, it is you."

They sat hand in hand in the growing dusk,

their young heads together, in an almost unbroken silence. The little room's walls had melted away; they were in a new land, so beautiful that they had no words to describe it. It was enough just to sit close and think together of the same wonderful thing.

At length the sound of mounting footsteps aroused them, and they started away from each other, Minnie fumbling with the lamp, Violett leaning against the window, looking out at the world of misty chimney pots that had succeeded to his Arcadia.

"Good-evening, Min; are you ready?"

It was d'Orsay, a carnation in his coat, his newly cut hair curled and scented. Violett wondered why he had ever disliked him, and turned cordially.

"Isn't it a—a beautiful evening?" he asked, with the new note bubbling in his voice.

D'Orsay stared. "Clean dotty, aren't you?" he answered at length with a laugh. "It's a vile evening, drizzly and cold. Ready, Min?"

Minnie hesitated, her pretty face flushed. "I promised Mr. Adams he might take me to the theatre this time," she said.

"You promised Mr. d'Orsay first, then. Mr. Adams can stay and admire the sunset from the window."

Violett did not protest. He was not jealous, and used as he was to solitude, even Minnie's absence at that moment was pleasant rather than otherwise. When the other two had gone he sat by the window dreaming, so happy that he almost wished he might die, for it lay in his nature unconsciously to doubt the possibility of the continuance of such divine happiness. He sat very quiet, until at length Bayne awoke, and called him.

"Min gone?"

"Yes — Mr. d'Orsay fetched her."

The sick man sighed, and Violett went on, going to the bed and sitting down by it, "Mr. Bayne, Minnie is going to marry me."

"You? But you said" —

"I know. But there is the island, and we have always lived there, Agnes and Michael and I."

Bayne frowned nervously. "Live there always? — Min? It 's an abnormal life for a young woman, and she 's used to excitement, Min is. Does she know she 'll 'ave to live there?"

Violett shook his head and smiled. "She won't care, Mr. Bayne. We shall be together — and by the sea."

The sick man fell back against his pillows with the sudden acceptance of the inexplicable common to children and very ill people.

"I am glad, Stevie; I 'ave 'ated this rackety

life for 'er. She 's that nervous and delicate — I am glad."

After a pause he added suddenly, "Stevie — don't tell 'er about — your father. It would — frighten 'er. She ain't strong, you know, and she 'as awful screaming fits."

Violett nodded, and went back to the window. He knew that his father's crime was his; that people who knew could not like him. It did not seem cruel or unfair to him, for he was used to the idea.

"Very well," he said after a pause, "I won't tell her."

III

MAUDIE COURTENAY sat on the floor, putting on a pair of pale-blue silk stockings. Her plump shoulders and arms, liberally sprinkled with scented powder, gleamed white in the bright light; her chemise, rich with lace frills, billowed about her like the petals of a gigantic flower. It was at the Regent's Theatre at Plymouth, early in January, and the first night of "The Gothic King."

Miss Courtenay (formerly Miss Maggie Crumm) was twenty-two years old, and had been on the stage since she was seventeen, but this was her first important rôle. As the young queen of the Goths, she was to appear in a splendid garment of purple velvet, liberally trimmed with cat-fur and gold braid. This was very charming, but the best was that she was in half an hour to win the heart of her desperate bridegroom, King Totila, who in a state of siege had married her merely as an encouragement to his soldiers.

And Miss Courtenay was in love with Violett, and counted much on the opportunities offered by the dramatic situation of the play.

"Bless 'is pretty eyes," thought the girl, as she smoothed the last wrinkle from her stockings and rose, "I bet 'e gives me a *real* kiss to-night."

Violett, in his room, was suffering an agony of stage fright, while his dresser bound his legs with thongs, and he gazed at himself in the glass. It had not occurred to him that he would be frightened. The whole thing had been strangely impersonal until to-night, but now he was on the point of breaking down.

The straight black hair of his long wig hung about his pale young face and gave it a strange look. His sheepskin garment left his arms bare in their youthful thinness, and near by stood his great shield and sword.

"Jones," he said at length to his dresser, "what am I to do? I can't remember *one word* of my lines!"

Jones, a red-nosed person who had been on intimate terms, to believe his own story, with every great actor of the past half-century, knotted the thong he had been at work on, and rose.

"Don't you worry," he observed comfortably, "they 're all like that on first-nights. You 'd orter seed Booth. 'Jones,' 'e useder say, 'I 'm a lost man! I 've clean forgotten my lines!' Then I 'd buck 'im up a bit and it 'd go all right."

"I wish you 'd buck *me* up a bit. I — I don't think I can go on."

Jones went out, and soon returned with a glass of beer. "Drink that, Mr. Haddams, it 's cheerin'.

Kean allus stuck to beer, *not* too cold, which it chills the inside."

Violett drank the beer obediently, and Jones began work on his face.

It was nearly eight o'clock, and in a few minutes the call-boy would come.

"'You men of Goth who side by side'" — the boy broke off — "'who side by side' — Jones, give me the book there under the curling tongs. I 've forgotten it all!"

When the curtain went up on the great hall in the palace at Naples, and the two generals had carefully explained the situation to each other, two men who sat in the stalls together smiled and shook their heads.

"Chaffee is the greatest fraud that ever lived," said the one. "Of course his company is frankly third rate, but he swore to me that this *one* play was worth something."

"Perhaps it is. At any rate, it is better than poking all the evening at the hotel. Hello, who 's this?"

Through the great door at the back of the stage came a youth, a long velvet mantle hung over his rough fur doublet. He walked slowly, haltingly, his head bent on his breast, and stopped in the middle of the stage. Then he looked up and said four words, "So it has come."

Arthur Wauchope sat up.

Violett hesitated, for he could not recall his next words, and to help himself out repeated the first ones, "So it has come!"

And the strange beauty of his voice was such that one might have heard the fall of the usual pin.

Then the prompter's voice awfully and audibly gave the cue, and the young king went on with his soliloquy.

The play was absurd, full of anachronisms, of bombastic speeches and impossible situations, but it pleased the audience. When the body of the centenarian herald was brought in with two large arrows in his breast, and the king wept, Plymouth wept with him, and the first act ended to a thunder of applause.

"The king is not bad," the elder of the two men in the stalls declared to his friend.

"He has no more idea of acting than of flying, but he has a voice! I never heard such a voice in my life, except Edwin Booth's, perhaps. What's his name? Adams," he read from the programme. "I think I'll go behind and speak to him. Will you come?"

Violett was sitting on a bench talking to his queen when the manager appeared, very much flurried, to introduce the great Arthur Wauchope to him.

The boy, who had taken off his wig, rose and bowed in silence.

"How old are you?" asked the actor-manager abruptly.

"I 'll be nineteen in August."

The elder of the two strangers here came forward. "Is your name really Adams?" he asked.

Violett hesitated. "No."

"Then you must be Violett Maule — are you?"

"Yes."

"I am Mr. Barton, Richard Barton. I am your guardian, you know."

Maudie Courtenay listened curiously.

"I know," Violett answered. "Please don't talk about it any more."

Wauchope grew impatient.

"Will you come to see me to-morrow at the Royal? I have several things to say to you."

"Thank you. Yes, I will come."

The two men withdrew, and Maudie turned to Violett.

"*Violet 's* your name! Perhaps you 're a girl in disguise? That fat old bird your guardian? Well, I must s'y. Perhaps you run away from 'ome to go on the stige?"

Violett shook his head. "No, I did n't. Please don't talk about it, Maudie."

The girl shrugged her shoulders and left him.

Chaffee, who had just come back from accompanying his distinguished acquaintance to the door, met her.

"This *is* a go," he declared, his face red with excitement. "Guess who the young 'un is."

Maudie shook her head. "The real heir of the Prince of Wiles?"

Chaffee pinched her arm. "Give me a kiss and I 'll tell you."

Maudie complied carelessly with his request, and ran her hand through his arm.

"Well?"

"You remember the poisoning case about ten years ago? A lighthouse-keeper on the east coast poisoned a child with sugar and swung for it? Well — that was Adams's father!"

"Oh, Gawd!"

Maudie's remark expressed merely horrified excitement. "Not really!"

"Sure thing. The old bloke with Wauchope told me. He told me not to mention it, so don't give it away."

The girl tossed her head. "*I* shan't give it aw'y."

The next scene was in the tent overlooking the Gothic defenses, and in it the young queen won the love of her new lord. It was Maud Courtenay's chance. When she found Totila weeping over his

shield, and laid her arm on his shoulder to comfort him, it was a very living arm and a close.

Then, when they shared the last bit of bread in the royal larder and she picked up the crumbs and gave them to him on her palm, he should have kissed her. The boy was an artist, but he was not an actor, and he loved Minnie Bayne, so the enforced contact with this other girl was disagreeable to him, and he avoided it as much as possible. At length two generals came in and held the centre of the stage for a few minutes, during which time the king, his heart full of new-born love, talked at the foot of the throne with his bride.

"Put your arm closer," the bride whispered. He obeyed mechanically, and as he did so, she swung forward, clasped his neck with her free arm, and kissed him full on the lips, greatly to the satisfaction of the audience.

It was not in the play, and Violett shrank away. "Don't!" he said sharply.

"Oh, Stephen, don't you love me just one little bit?" she whispered.

"Oh, *don't!* No, I don't love you. I like you very much, but" —

Bending, she caught his hand, and to the audience sweetly kissing it, buried her small teeth deep in the fleshy part of the palm.

He did not cry out, and the curtain went down.

As he passed to his room, his lips pale with pain, Miss Courtenay stood talking excitedly with a little group of warriors and ladies.

"*Hung*, I tell you," she cried, "hung till his neck broke! *I* don't want to act with no man as has poisoning in his fam'ly; it might be 'eredit'ry!"

The listeners laughed, and Violett went on, his feet dragging like leaden things. So it had followed him here, too.

The last act went fairly well, though his voice failed queerly from time to time, and his acting was obviously a *tour de force*, until towards the end, when he had to divide a piece of bread, brought him by a faithful slave, between his bride and a dying soldier.

Breaking the crust, he held out half to the queen.

> "'This quite last bit of Gothic bread
> E'er to be eaten by a Goth I give
> To you, my queen, my bride.'"

The queen took it, and retired to the back of the stage, saying audibly to the king and the warriors and ladies, "No, thank you, King Violett; I ain't ready to die *yet!*"

There was a sudden, quickly subdued laugh, and Violett lost his head. He stammered, forgot his lines, and with a short cry rushed from the stage.

IV

It was raining when the boy, wrapped in a long cloak he had caught up in passing, left the theatre. The streets were gleaming with the lights, the corners of the buildings rounded to softness by the clinging fog that crept in from the sea.

The chill air was grateful to his hot face, and the tears that stood on his lashes dried without falling.

On and on he went, walking very fast, keeping in the shadow as much as possible, darting across the street or into some blind alley to avoid an occasional wayfarer.

He must be alone — alone to give his misery head — alone to suffer.

His aching hand, bound in a handkerchief, he held to his breast, and with the other he gathered close the cloak that covered his stage costume.

He was not angry, even with the woman who had so cruelly wounded him; the laughter of the others seemed to him most natural; it was only that once more the fact of his being a pariah was brought home to him in a way pitilessly distinct, and he was facing as a man for the first time what he had so often faced as a child.

Minnie would hear, and then she would never

see him again. Or rather, she *could n't* see him again. It was no fault of hers, and she would suffer as much as he.

He had come to the lower part of the town, and out on to the Barbican. To his right slept the tall old houses ; an occasional pot-house window gleamed through the mist; to his left, pale water.

Some instinct had brought him there, and the voice of his old friend comforted him. He walked to the end of the jetty, passing unconsciously over the stone that marks the place from which the Mayflower had set sail so long ago, and sat down, his feet hanging over the water.

He tried to decide what to do, and then suddenly everything seemed to have decided itself.

He would go home, go back to Agnes and the Cradle, go back where nobody mocked him, where he could be alone.

That some one would tell Minnie at once, he had no doubt; and he would not see her again.

It was cowardice, but there was bravery in it. It had grown with his growth, nourished by the nature of his life, and he had no strength to fight.

His courage was of the passive kind; he could bear bravely, in silence, all that might come to him, but he could not fight, and he could not see Minnie shrink from him. So the next day, when he had got his clothes, and been stormed at and

abused by the indignant Chaffee, refusing with a gentle obstinacy even to try the rôle once more, the boy left Plymouth, and went home.

It was evening when he reached St. Kilian's and made his way to Bob Venn's cottage. The fisherman, whose old mother had been his companion for years, met him at the door with a drawn face and red eyes.

"Mother 's gone, Vi'lett," he said, too much absorbed in his own grief to notice the suddenness of the boy's appearance. "Her went Sunday."

"Oh, Bob!"

"Yes. And I 'm alone now. Come in an' look at 'er. She 's jest sleepin' like."

On the clean white bed the little old woman lay, in a decent black gown, her hands clasped on her breast.

"She grow'd littler and littler all winter. It were n't a sickness, she said; it were jest like a tree in the autumn, dryin' up." The big man sat down and looked at his dead.

"It 's a wonderful thing, a mother, Vi'lett," he went on. "Other folks can love you, but only your mother *understands*. She works for you, looks after you, loves you, forgives you anything you may do, understands you, and then the only thing bad she iver does to you is to die an' leave you."

Violett nodded. "She was tired, Bob, perhaps?"

"Tired? Not her! Not my old wumman! Tired o' doing for me? Nay, nay, lad, you never had a mother, so to speak; you can't know." He laid his great hand very gently on the little cold folded ones.

"Vi'lett, I 'm a-goin' to bury her to-night. Will 'ee come along an' help me?"

"To-night, Bob Venn?"

"Yes. No passon and churchyard for her. My father was drownded, an' she loved the watter."

"Are you going to — to drown her?" stammered the boy.

Venn laughed. "I be a-goin' to take her out in my boat, an' let her sink down through God's clear watter. Then when I 'm fishing, or coming home in the sunset, or goin' out before the dawn, Vi'lett, she 'll be near me. Will 'ee come?"

"Yes, I 'll come."

Venn went to the kitchen, and came back with three flatirons. "Weights," he said, simply explanatory. "They 've served her many a time; they shall serve her this once more."

He handed the flatirons to the boy, and then taking a gray woolen cloak down from its nail, laid it over the old woman, and lifted her gently in his arms.

It was but a step from the cottage down the steep path to the shore, and a few yards out the

little boat was dancing like a wraith in the faint starlight.

Venn waded in, and Violett followed. The old woman lay in the stern, decently covered with her cloak, as the boat, its anchor pulled up, sped away from the neighborhood of the shore.

Violett sat very quiet, watching the stars. He was glad to be at home, and the sort of apathy that had come over him was not unpleasing.

He would help Agnes, who knew and loved him, he would help Michael, he would try to comfort Bob Venn. He shuddered at the thought of his recent experience, and his hand ached.

After a short run Venn pulled in his sail and dropped anchor.

"This will do," he said briefly. "The cottage is in sight, and the light, and I can pass here as often as I like."

He uncovered the dead woman's quiet face and looked at her for a moment. Then he fastened the flatirons to her feet and waist, and lifted her. He did not speak again, and his eyes were dry. When he had let her slip gently out of his arms into the waiting water there was a short pause.

"Strange, Vi'lett," he said, at last, looking towards the quiet stars, "I sent her down, but she 's gone straight up yonder!"

The boat skimmed onward towards the island,

where the great steady light glowed against the sky.

"Have you come back for good, Vi'lett?"

The boy started.

"Yes, Bob Venn."

"Was it — very bad?"

"Yes. Bad enough."

"Because of — that which you can't help?"

"Yes. People can't stand it, you see. It is too bad. You and Agnes and Michael don't mind, though, do you?"

"No, an' my old wumman neither, she did n't mind, and I tell you, Vi'lett, gentlemen and ladies would n't mind either. It 's the other kind of people as can't stand it. It 's main sad you be n't a gentleman, for then no one 'd bring it up 'gainst you. God makes all people equal, that 's true. All little bare babies is equal, but he lets 'em grow up very unequal, an' the ones that grow up ladies and gentlemen understands better."

Violett looked wistfully at him.

"Yes, I wish I was a gentleman," he said.

V

Two days after his return, Violett was at work making some slight repairs to one of the wicks of the great light.

It was a mild day, full of the trouble of early spring, though it was only January. The boy sat on the floor of the little platform, the sky blue above him, but his heart heavy in his breast.

Even to his passive, patient nature, renunciation was hard; and he had renounced not only Minnie, but, it seemed to him, life itself.

He had once more proved that his father's act had put him, the son, beyond the pale, — that the only place left for him was the island. And he was eighteen years old. He recalled, as he worked, the hours passed with Minnie by her father's bedside, the evenings when she had come home tired from the theatre, and his had been the privilege of preparing a little supper for her.

One Sunday they had walked in the Park, and Minnie had told him who some of the occupants of the beautiful carriages were, for she was well informed about many things of which he, of course, was utterly ignorant.

Another Sunday they had walked on the Embankment, in the evening, and watched the lights

bursting out of the misty gloom. The magic of that hour in a great city is very strong to such natures as the boy's: the mystery of human life wonderful, as the passers-by disappear, never to be seen again,—the rich and the poor, the happy and the miserable.

It had struck Violett, he remembered, that one could count in the absent on the regular fulfilling of but two things, their eating and their sleeping. In that all men are alike.

What Minnie was doing he could not tell, but he knew she drank coffee at half-past eight, ate meat at noon, and tea and bread and butter before the sleep in which she must sometimes dream of him.

The sound of Michael's slow footsteps ading up the stairs roused him from his reverie.

"Villett, Villett," the old man began, before his head had appeared out of the darkness, "a telegram for 'ee!"

Then the lined old face appeared, served up on his red muffler as on a plate, his eyes gleaming with curiosity.

"'Violett Maule, Maule Island, St. Kilian's, Xshire.' That's you, Villett. Now open it and let's see who be a-sendin' us telegrams."

Violett took the dispatch and opened it with icy fingers. It was the first he had ever seen in his life.

"Please come back. — Minnie."

With a cry, he crushed the paper to his lips, and rushed down the dark stairs at a break-neck speed. He was to go back! She wanted him!

He flew through the muddy garden and down the path, hardly knowing whither he was bound, and then, when he found himself close to the sea, lay down in the warm, wet sand, and cried his heart out.

The waves whispered, "Minnie." A great gull that whirred above him rejoiced with him. The very sky was blue and light with sympathy.

The boy rose at length, and returned to the house, where old Agnes sat patiently waiting for an explanation.

"Agnes," he said, kissing her worn cheek, "I am going to be married."

"Married! You married, Vi'lett? Bless and save us, lad, have 'ee lost your wits?"

"To Minnie — Minnie Bayne. Agnes," he added solemnly, "she is an angel."

Agnes had never seen Minnie, but she had all a woman's natural distrust of the unknown woman loved by a dear man.

"Women be n't angels, Vi'lett," she said, passing her hand over his face and feeling his tremulous smile. "I pray she is a good girl, and that will suffice."

"She *is* a good girl. And oh, she is so beautiful, Agnes! If only you could see her!"

He sat down on his little old stool, his knees under his chin, his hand in the old woman's. "Shall I tell you what she looks like?"

"Ay, tell me, dearie."

The clock drowsed in the corner, the low fire glowed, and Violett described his lady.

"She is small, Agnes, slight, with narrow feet and hands — oh, her little pointed fingers! Her hair is yellow like ripe corn, but with a lustre like sunlight. Her face is small and white, with dark eyebrows, each like a tiny feather, and her eyes are blue, dark blue, like the sea, sometimes almost purple, sometimes almost gray. Her nose — I never noticed her nose," he added dreamily, "but her mouth! Ah, the dear mouth! It is pink, and smooth like a rose leaf, and curved like the inside of a shell. It is warm — and sweet" —

He broke off, staring into the fire.

"A young maid's mouth, Vi'lett, to the lad that loves her," remarked Agnes gently, a smile in her blind eyes. "Now tell me about her heart."

"Ah, she is kind and gentle and loving. She is busy and quiet and cheerful, and sometimes very tired, when she must sit quite still, with her little hands idle. Then the dear shadows under her eyes are darker, and the corners of her mouth droop."

"Weakly like?"

"Yes. She is not strong. Every night she must sing — in a theatre, you know. Once I went to hear her. There were a great many girls singing together, but I could hear her voice above all the others."

"She is a play-actress?" asked Agnes very gently, to hide the sudden pang that smote her.

"Yes. Of course. You knew that Mr. Bayne was."

"I had forgotten. And when you are married, Violett, where shall you live?"

"Live? I don't know. Together."

She had n't the heart to insist. He had no plans; that she saw. Always vague, he was now in his enveloping happiness vaguer than ever. In silence they sat by the dying fire, each occupied with the thought of the little chorus girl in London.

And the sun went down, and night crept in from the sea.

VI

WHEN Violett arrived in London the second time, he was met, to his great delight, by Mrs. Bayne, resplendent in an olive plush mantle and a very plumy bonnet.

"My dear boy — I may say, my dear son," she began majestically, extending to him a fat hand in a soiled white kid glove, "welcome!" And if the mayor and corporation had offered him the freedom of the city on a purple cushion, the boy could not have been prouder.

"Bayne being still confined to his room," the señora went on, as they left the station and stood waiting for the enchanted 'bus that was to fly with them to Minnie's side, "I decided to come myself to meet you, for as I said to Bayne, 'James, this is no hordinary occasion.'"

The 'bus stopped, and the señora being with some difficulty hoisted to a position sufficiently elevated to satisfy her sense of dignity, she went on: "Minnie being our honly child, since the loss of our hever to be lamented Reginald, the givin' of 'er hup is not easy, Stevie, but when two loving 'earts loves each other, what am I to hinterfere?"

Violett beamed gratefully at her. "*Dear* Señora," he said, "I can't thank you for being so

good to me; you were always good to me, but I am grateful, — indeed, indeed I am."

The señora bowed in her most stately manner. "I believe it, Stevie."

A wag on the box seat here turned, and lifting his hat began jabbering very rapidly and quite incomprehensibly to either the lady or Violett.

"Wot 's that yer saying?" she asked, divided between offense and curiosity.

"Aw, I beg your pardon, ma'am. I understood the young gent to call you señora, and as I 'm a Spaniard, I could n't resist the chawnce for a few words in my nitive tongue."

He was so obviously a Briton that every one laughed, except the señora, whose retort was much to the point, if not over-civil, and Violett, who flushed painfully and wished he had n't heard what she said.

All feelings of discomfort fled, however, a few minutes later, when the 'bus stopped, and he and the señora clambered down into the beautiful mud. Minnie, Minnie!

The young girl was sitting with her father when they came in, and when Violett's first breathless ecstasy was over, he was startled to find her looking very ill. The purple shadows under her eyes had deepened to a dark brown; her lips were of the palest salmon color.

"Pining for you, Stevie. Oh, you men!" observed the señora, waggishly reproachful.

The boy drew the girl to the window.

"Was it really that, Minnie?" he asked, his brows knit with anxiety.

"Yes — no. I don't know. It was unkind of you to go away like that."

"But — you knew why?"

"Yes, Mr. Chaffee told father. It was silly of you to break down, Stevie, but — you need n't have run away. It did n't make any difference to *me*."

His eyes filled with tears, and his heart smote him.

"I thought — you would hate me, — that you would n't be able to stand it."

"Min!" called the señora, who had taken off her boots and was resting her feet on the bed, "I 'ope you 've something nice for supper?"

Minnie left the window and set the table, while Violett sat down by his future parents-in-law.

"You must have thought me very — foolish to run away," he began with some difficulty, "but I thought she 'd never care to see me again."

"My dear boy, it was stage fright. Just that and nothing more. All us hartists 'as 'ad it," answered the señora.

"Yes, but I meant" —

She held up a warning forefinger. "*Sst!* It don't do to talk about it, my dear. Let bygones bury their dead. Min is very nervous, so don't you worry 'er about your father's — misfortune. Why, she cried for hours the other day about a child that fell into a vat of b'iling liquid. As the liquid was b'iling, the child was naturally b'iled too. But it gave Min the 'orrors, reg'lar."

"But — she does *know?*" he persisted gently. "I mean, my real name, and about — my father?"

"Of course she knows, or 'ow could she 'ave sent you that dispatch," returned the señora, with a genial disregard of consequences. "So don't you be a stoopid and upset her. She says to me, 'Ma, don't let 'im talk about it; that 's all I hask.'"

Bayne tossed his hands nervously on the bed-quilt. "Do what Dooloars tells you, Stevie," he said. "She knows Min, and if you want 'er you 've got to be careful."

Violett was content, and when the little supper was ready, they all ate it with much pleasure.

"Weal-an'-'am pie is a dish as cawn't be beat, to my mind," observed the señora, helping herself for the third time, "and with a good glass of beer, what more can the queen 'erself, Gawd bless 'er, ask for?"

Minnie was very gentle with her father, feeding him milk with a spoon, holding his poor skull-like

head when the dreadful coughing fits came, and soothing him with loving words.

Violett wished Agnes was there.

After supper Minnie and he went into the other room and washed the dishes by candle-light. It being Sunday, there was no opera; and washing dishes by candle-light is an occupation for the gods. The play, Minnie told the boy, had only been given once more, but was to rejoice the inhabitants of Devonport that week. "Mr. Briggs is doing the king, you know. I had a letter from Maudie yesterday."

Violett's heart sank. "I have an idea that Maudie did n't exactly hate *you*, Stevie," the girl went on, turning a glass round and round in the folds of her dish-towel. "Now did she?"

Violett blushed. "Why should she hate me?" he asked.

The young girl took the candle and held it to his face. "Oh, you wicked boy, you are blushing! Did she make love to you? Come, tell me."

He took the candle and set it down on the table, then he kissed her. So much nature taught him. Then he blundered.

"You *know* I love only you, Min," he said, much too seriously. "Don't tease me."

And Minnie, nervous, overworked all her life, tired now from nursing her father, burst into a

wild sobbing that frightened him nearly out of his wits.

"Min, Min, *don't!* Don't cry, darling. *Why* are you crying?"

But she pushed him away, and rushing into the next room, flung herself into her mother's arms, shrieking that Stevie loved Maud Courtenay and was false.

The señora's motherly dignity was wonderful. She carried the girl into the bedroom, closed the door, and left Violett alone with Bayne, who was almost too weak to talk, but who managed to articulate, —

"She is ill, Violett. I told you not to worry her."

"But I didn't *mention* my father to her! It was all about Maud."

A faint smile stirred the sick man's dry lips. It was a fly in the ointment, but not a very bad one.

The next day the young girl was sweet and sorry, and Violett's heart full almost to the bursting-point.

That evening the señora asked him what plans he was making for the future.

"Plans?" His eyes were perfectly vague as he looked up at her.

"Plans — yes — for the wedding."

It had never occurred to him to arrange a wedding day. He was so happy in the present that the

future seemed to be quite capable of taking care of itself.

"The wedding!"

The señora laughed. "The wedding. Bayne can't last much longer, and he 'd like to see Min married — would n't you, Bayne?"

Violett looked with frightened eyes at the sick man, who, however, merely nodded.

"I am ready, any time," the boy went on.

"Then let us say a week from Wednesday?"

"Yes," said Violett.

The big woman looked at him and shook her head. "You are 'opeless, Stevie. Who 's a-goin' to get yer license? You don't know no more about getting married than a bibe in arms!"

Violett laughed shamefacedly, and the señora rose. "We 'll talk it over to-morrow, and now it is eleven o'clock, and I am weary."

Violett took the hint and went out to the landing to wait for Minnie, who must soon be coming.

He sat down on the dusty stairs, in the darkness, and leaned his head on his hand. In ten days he was to be married. The house was very still. Once a door closed; once a clock struck.

It never occurred to the boy that it would be better for Minnie not to come home alone or with some casual companion, at eleven o'clock at night.

Once he had fetched her at the theatre, but she

had begged him not to do so again, as the girls teased her about him. So he sat in the darkness waiting for her, and at last she came, alone.

She was very tired, and cried a little from sheer fatigue, her head on his shoulder, as they sat huddled together, talking.

It was as much an idyl to her, poor child, as it was to him, his honest, boyish love falling like moonlight on her sordid life, and making it beautiful.

At last they kissed each other good-night, and separated, Violett going to his little room under the roof, to sit another hour by the window, dreaming.

VII

THE wedding was to be on Wednesday, and Monday morning found the señora very busy making preparations for the breakfast.

The little kitchen, dark even at midday, was illuminated with the big lamp, and the señora herself sat at the table, her trailing silken garments folded snugly about her waist, and covered with a blue checked apron, polishing the silver. Opposite her sat Maudie Courtenay, just back in town after a big smash-up of the company in Liverpool, who had come to invite the wedding party to a supper the next evening.

"Chaffee done 'is best, it 's only fair to say, but the company was *too* rotten. Even the smaller towns could n't stand Miss de Vere. That woman *always* 'ad a cold in 'er nose, and 'er snuffling was something *'orrid.*"

The señora straightened a fork that she had bent in the energy of her polishing.

"Law, not reely!"

"Yes. She was a reg'lar 'orror." Miss Courtenay hesitated for a second and then went on, —

"Say, Señora, what *does* Min think about Stevie's father?"

"'Is father? 'Is father 's dead."

"I know. Oh, I know all about it. I should think it 'd give 'er the creeps, though, poor dear. 'Anging *is* so awful."

The señora was startled, but her splendid composure stood her in good stead. "Dreadful," she assented, breathing on the bowl of a spoon, and then rubbing it vigorously. "But that was *Maule* as was 'ung, my love."

"Well, *Stevie's* name is Violett Maule."

"It is; but Minnie does not know it."

"You don't mean that she does n't know 'is name is n't Adams!"

"No. You see, she 's dreadful sensitive, Min is, and me 'n' 'er fawther thought it best not to shock her."

"But he can't be married under a false nime!" cried the erstwhile Gothic queen shrewdly.

"Of course he can't. Any idiot knows *that.* But we decided to tell 'er the evening before the wedding, that is, to-morrow, that he 's 'ad to change 'is name on account of the money. See?"

"Money? What money?"

The señora rose, and taking off her apron, allowed her gown to fall into its usual classic folds, before answering with some pomp, "Did n't you know 'e 'ad nearly twelve thousand pounds?"

"That boy?"

Maudie's chin dropped, her mouth hanging half open.

"Nearly twelve thousand pounds?"

"Then why in the name of goodness does he wear such *awful* clothes? An' not a single ring!"

The señora hesitated. Then she said, deciding against the splendid dramatic possibilities of a story of a recent inheritance, "It 's a long story. Mr. Wauchope, who is a great friend of Stevie's, told Mr. Bayne. They are going to live at Stevie's place, on the east coast."

But this was too much for Maudie.

"Place! Plice, indeed! 'Is father was a light-keeper; I know *that* much, Mrs. Bayne."

"Well, an' cawn't a lighthouse be called a place, Miss *Crumm?*"

Before the outraged Miss Courtenay could retort, Bayne called from the next room, and the señora swept splendidly out of the kitchen.

"Don't fight her, Dooloars," the sick man whispered, catching her hand in his hot one. "She 'll give the whole thing away to Min."

The señora nodded. "I 'll make it up with 'er, Jim. Min won't be back until late, anyhow."

"And where 's the boy?"

"'E 's coming any minute now."

Bayne lay still on his hot pillows. The wedding was to be the next day but one, and to the tired man it seemed as if with it came his deliverance.

Minnie once married, he could die in peace. The girl's weak, fanciful, over-nervous nature her father knew, perhaps because of some subtle resemblance in it to his own, better than any one in the world.

D'Orsay saw one side of it, the foolish, admiration-loving, coquettish side; her mother the artistic side, full of the laziness in practical things common to the small, uneducated artist; Violett, with his loving young eyes, saw the girl as she might have been, — affectionate, simple, and truthful.

Only Bayne, and he only since he had been forced by illness to the leisure that gave him time for hours of reflection, saw all the sides combined into a whole.

And in his wisdom he had allowed his wife to do what she did out of motives very different from her own. It was perfectly indifferent to the señora whether or no all of her future son-in-law's forbears had been hanged or not. The point was that Violett wanted to marry Minnie, was fond of her, and best and most important of all, had money.

Until she learned, through Wauchope's careless recital of Barton's story, of the money, she had been keenly for d'Orsay, who was to her mind a handsome and smart man of talent.

Violett's fortune, however, swung the balance

around, and knowing that Minnie would shrink from the boy if she knew his father's story, she had contrived to make him think that it was known to the girl, but that she did not wish to talk of it.

Then she would tell Minnie that Stevie had changed his name to obtain a large fortune; in the hurry of the wedding day there would be no time for questioning, and once married, they could fight it out.

"Min 'll screech a bit, as she did over that grave-robbing story, but she 'll quiet down all right," she told her husband comfortably, and he, relieved from his great anxiety regarding d'Orsay, whom he had always distrusted, and seeing no other way out of the difficulty, held his peace.

"After all," he thought that morning, while the sound of the señora's most imposing voice, as she made peace with Miss Courtenay, reached him at intervals, "she does love him in her way, and once away from London, away from d'Orsay"— He broke off, for even in his thoughts he hated to admit that his daughter seemed, even while the best in her clung to Violett, strongly attracted by the actor's dark face. D'Orsay continued coming to see her, and to bring her home from the theatre, in spite of the engagement, on which he had politely congratulated the instantly propitiated Violett; and more than once Bayne, lying unobserved

in his bed, had noticed glances between the older man and his daughter that he disliked. Then Minnie had frequently come home with a gardenia on her breast, and d'Orsay was rarely without one of the hatefully sweet flowers.

"Yes, it is the only thing to do," he decided, too tired to think further; "it will be all right."

As he closed his eyes and allowed himself to sink into the stupor-like sleep he so often had to fight against, Violett came in, a bunch of geraniums in his hand.

"From home, Mr. Bayne! Agnes sent them to Minnie. She must have quite ruined all her pots!"

He held the brilliant things to the sick man's face, and then, as he turned, the señora came in with Maud Courtenay.

Violett started. He had not seen the girl since the night in Plymouth.

She, however, met him with a smile and an outstretched hand.

"'Dear king, my lord, mine eyes are full of light in seeing thee,'" she quoted. "I 'm glad to be in time for the wedding! The señora 'as just invited me."

The boy stared at her in honest silence. He hated seeing her: she reminded him of one of the most painful events in his life, and worst of all,

she would remind Minnie of things he had been warned not to mention to her.

Minnie had of late been so nervous, so irritable even, at times, that he had been afraid she herself would begin on the subject. She had not done this, however, and the señora had told him, with a wonderful air of motherly mystery, that Minnie was agitated at the prospect of being married, and leaving her parents.

"Glad to see me, Mr. Maule?" went on Miss Courtenay, "or I suppose you are still Mr. *Hadams?*"

Violett, to whom the telling of the story of his assumed name had been very painful, glanced at the señora, who was heating a curling iron at the fire.

"Of course not, my dear," that lady explained graciously; "but we all still call him Stevie. Violett is such a extrawnery nime for a man."

The girl nodded, and held out her hand to Violett.

"Well, good-by for the present. I — I 'm sorry I was so disagreeable at Plymouth, Stevie. I only wanted to be pl'yful, and you did n't understand."

As she left the room, the boy looked half involuntarily at his hand, on which two still reddish marks remained as a souvenir of her playfulness.

VIII

THE señora, Minnie, and Violett arrived together at Miss Courtenay's, — the señora, resplendent in a peacock blue gown thickly sown with spangles, facetiously explaining that it was not strange, their simultaneous appearance, as they had left home together.

"Charming room, Miss Courtenay," the great lady went on, with the graciousness peculiar to her, "them folding beds is most convenient."

The table was spread, and garnished with a large bouquet of roses in a blue jar.

"D'Orsay sent me the flowers," Maudie explained, with a side glance at Minnie, who sat, very pale, with nervously clasped hands, by the window.

"Always the gentleman, d'Orsay," approved the señora. "Ain't 'e coming?"

Maudie smiled. "Trust 'im! Of course 'e 's coming. Ain't 'e the best man?"

Minnie started. "No, he ain't, Maudie — he ain't the best" —

Maudie burst into a roar of laughter. "Now don't you chew the rag, my ducky. Of *course* your *h'm* — Stevie is the best man in the world. I meant" —

"I know — Maudie — my head aches so I 'm stupid " —

Minnie blushed in her confusion, a phenomenon that transported Violett to a seventh heaven of rapture, and while he watched her d'Orsay came in, breathing fragrance about him, his smooth black hair gleaming from the recent pomade.

"Welcome, little stranger," Maudie called. "Now we 're all 'ere. Could n't ask any more, for I 've only got five chairs."

They sat down at the table; and the supper, served by a shabby man from a neighboring restaurant, began.

Violett ate little; he hated being in the room. It and Maudie's voice and Maudie herself seemed red to him, the color he loathed.

Even pale Minnie lost her silver gray tone, and took on a reddish tint, as does a little willow against a crimson sky.

To-morrow they would be away, — on the quiet island, within the sound of the sea.

The boy recalled the supper at the Sea-Urchin long ago, when Minnie and he were children; he remembered the laughter and jokes of the guests, the beauty of the señora, Bayne's quiet face.

"You ain't eating a *thing*, Mr. *h'm* — Adams," cried Maudie at this point. "Don't you like veal?"

Violett hated it, and as he never lied, smiled at

her, his smile almost affectionate in his sorrow for hurting her feelings. The girl's face changed. "*Please* eat something," she said gently; and the señora, manfully attacking the veal herself, seconded her hostess with enthusiasm and a full mouth.

"Delicious, Stevie, an' the *grivy* is something splendid."

Minnie smiled absently. She was happy. She was glad to be going away with Stevie, who was always gentle and good with her; she was tired of noise and crowds; the quiet of the island would rest her. The best that was in the girl was satisfied.

D'Orsay watched her, his always pale face curiously white, a fixed smile under his mustache.

Maud Courtenay saw that her guests were not doing justice to the rather elaborate supper, and she knew why. Only the señora ate steadily on with a placid greediness. At length the shabby man came in with two pails of ice, in each of which a bottle of champagne was buried. "Ah, yes, Maudie, I took the liberty," explained d'Orsay with magnificent carelessness, "you having no man in your family."

But Maudie needed no apologies, and blew him a succession of kisses to express her delight at his thoughtfulness.

The wine, drunk out of water glasses, contributed largely to the gayety of the occasion.

The señora drank repeated toasts to the health of her dear children. Minnie smiled, and a little pink came to her thin cheeks. D'Orsay's eyes, still fixed on the girl, glowed darkly. Maudie danced a cakewalk, to which no one but the shabby waiter paid any particular heed.

Violett watched them all dreamily; he drank very little wine, but that little softened the hated color of his surroundings to a deep rose. And Minnie sat opposite him, her blue eyes fixed on him, on her lips a smile for him.

"Ladies and genple — gentlemen!" The señora struck the table sharply with her knife-handle. "Once more — the health of my darling cheeild and her blushing bridegroom — no, I mean, my blushing cheeild" —

"Ma, do stop!"

"Let 'er alone, Min; what 's the 'arm, if it amuses 'er!" Miss Courtenay refilled the señora's glass.

D'Orsay laughed sharply. "Don't be *too* hospitable, Maudie. *I* cawn't carry 'er 'ome."

Violett shrank back into his chair.

"Nerrermind, Maudie, you 're perfectly right," pursued the señora with amiable vagueness, — "what 's the 'arm? Stevie, 'ere 's looking at you."

Violett bowed. "Thank you, Señora; thank you very much."

"She 's my only child, since my darling, my darling" — "Reginald," suggested Violett quietly. "Since 'e died, she 's my only daughter. Treat 'er good, Stevie; be kind to 'er."

Violett took her hand, promising in an undertone that he would be very good and kind.

Minnie smiled tremulously.

"It 's late, Stevie. Perhaps we 'd better go? No — no more wine, ma — *please.*"

They rose; and Violett, as he passed Minnie to fetch the señora's hat, laid his hand for an instant on the young girl's arm.

Maud Courtenay saw it; she saw the look in his eyes, and with a laugh and a quick glance at d'Orsay, caught up her wineglass.

"A toast! One more. Here 's luck to you, Minnie, and lucky you are, for you 's got not only love, but *riches.*"

Minnie smiled vaguely, but her mother caught at the word.

"Ah, yes — riches it is — that is, 'e don't own Buckingham Palace, Stevie don't, nor yet Windsor, but 'e 's a nice little what you callem — a nice little fortune."

D'Orsay raised his heavy eyebrows in polite admiration. "'Ave you now, reely, Mr. Adams?

My congratulations. And to you, too, Miss Bayne. You did well. In that case you 'builded better than I knew,' to accept Mr. Adams, and not — the poor player."

Violett listened, puzzled. "There is some mistake," he said simply, after a pause. "I am not rich. I have no money."

Maudie shrugged her shoulders. "The señora told me you 'ad, I 'm sure, but it 's of no consequence. Let 's dance!"

Picking up her skirts she began an impromptu dance that involved much kicking. Minnie watched her, amused.

"The señora tells the truth," observed that personage with great dignity. "'E '*as* a fortune which whyshud deny 't."

Violett gave her her hat. "Come, Señora," the boy said gently, "we must go. Mr. Bayne is all alone."

"Go away, Stevie Adams!" cried the indignant woman. "Don't you lie about it! If I said you was rich, you are rich!"

"Yes, yes, maw, 'e 's awful rich. E 's a-going to put the Koh-i-noor in the wedding cake as a souvenir," put in Minnie with soothing facetiousness.

Maud Courtenay looked on, half frightened by what she had brought about. D'Orsay's eyes were still fixed on Minnie.

"Then if you have no money, how dare you ask me for my daughter?"

The señora was sobered now.

"I never said I had any money, Señora."

"But thingummy did — 'e said so. The money that lawyer has for you."

Violett stood perfectly quiet, facing them all.

"Ah, that money!"

"Yes. It *is* money, ain't it?"

"Yes. But — I shall never touch it."

"Never touch it!" screamed the señora. "Never touch it! Then what are you going to live on, I 'd like to know?"

"What is it, Stevie? What does she mean?" Minnie came to him and laid her hand on his arm.

"It is — some money that I can never use, Minnie. You don't mind, do you?"

Minnie shook her head. "I wish you would, Stevie!"

"But I *can't*, dear. It is — wicked money."

The señora had pinned on her hat with the air of a warrior putting on his helmet.

"Come, Miss Bayne, we will now go home to your pa. Mr. Adams, good-by. If you are a pauper, you are no 'usband for *my* daughter."

Violett stood quite still, and every one looked at him. There was something very strange in his smitten passivity.

"Perhaps she 'll take you — poor — anyhow," faltered Maudie at length.

Then the boy turned his miserable eyes to Minnie, and she sprang back to him and put her arms around him.

"I don't *care*, Stevie! I will marry you just the same, and we will be poor together!"

Maud turned away, her jealousy and hatred dead in her heart. She felt as though she were in a temple.

Even yet there was a chance for the boy. The malice of the woman who loved him and the man who loved Minnie were overpowered, beaten by the force of better things; and the señora was not an unkind woman, and at another time would doubtless have held her tongue and let things take their course. But the señora had been drinking.

"Leave him, Min! Come 'ere to me! I can't see you touch 'im! 'Is fawther was hung! *Hung*, I tell you!"

Minnie gave a little cry, and left Violett's side.

"Hung!"

"Hung till 'is neck broke — for murder! 'E killed, 'e poisoned a little child!"

"Is — is it true, Stevie?"

The girl turned a perfectly white face to Violett's.

"It is true," he returned dully.

With a gesture of unutterable abhorrence, she turned away, and burst into hysterical shrieks.

"Minnie!" It was Maud Courtenay who spoke, now thoroughly frightened and ashamed of herself. "Min, *'e* did n't do nothing!"

But Maud drew back, frightened anew, as d'Orsay came to the sobbing girl and took her into his arms.

"Minnie, dearest, do not cry. You never loved him — and I" —

His voice shook with real emotion, and Minnie, clinging to him as a terrified child clings to the nearest protector, sobbed out, "Make him go away! Make him go away!"

But there was no need to make Violett go away. He had already gone.

PART III

I

A LIGHT rain was falling, softening the sharp angles of the world, veiling everything with its tender grayness. Violett stood on Westminster Bridge, looking down at the leaden water. He had walked until he was utterly exhausted and could go no more.

It was all over now. The grim ghost of his father that had haunted him all his life had at the last stepped definitely in between him and — not happiness, but life.

There was no revolt in the boy's heart, no wild anger against the inevitable; he had no idea of killing himself.

Passive, he had come to what appeared to him the end of his life, and as he could see nothing ahead of him, and believed that there was no future, he stood on the great bridge, awaiting, with his curious fatalism, the end.

The clock in the tower boomed out seven o'clock, softly, mistily, its loud voice gray in the moist air. Violett turned and looked towards the sound. Its neutral tone, or as he felt, its neutral color, soothed him. It was gray like the sea, like beautiful music.

"Well — fine evening, ain't it? Nice moist rain, good for the vigetition!"

A girl stood beside him and smiled at him from under her gay though bedraggled hat.

He did not answer, but looked quietly at her without curiosity.

"Deef and dumb?"

He shook his head.

"Oh. Just 'orty. Well — good-by. I thought you looked lonely, that 's all."

Then he spoke, as she turned on her worn heel and started off.

"I am lonely."

She was back at his side almost before he had finished. "Are you? Then let 's be lonely together."

They walked slowly past the Abbey and turned towards Piccadilly.

The girl watched her companion curiously, her black eyes puzzled. "Glad you came?" she asked at length.

"Came — where?"

"Why, *'ere*. With me."

"Oh, yes, I 'm glad," he returned, with weary politeness.

"Have you had any supper?"

"No. I have n't eaten anything all day."

"Not all day! Why, you must be starving."

Violett stopped walking and looked at her, absently thoughtful. "Perhaps it *is* that," he commented, after a pause.

"*What 's* that? What d' you mean?"

"I mean — this queer feeling."

She laughed shortly. "It 's a precious queer feeling, my child. It 's an emptiness that just *fills* you."

"It 's that."

They stared at each other for a second, and then she took his arm and turned him briskly down a side street.

"We 'll 'ave our supper," she said gayly, "and then we 'll go and look at the nobs going to the pl'y."

Violett hurried along, hardly conscious of what he was doing.

It would have been a relief to him to have her take the initiative had he noticed in himself any lack of initiative, but he had not. He had simply drifted about the streets since the evening before, with the indifference of utter despair, neither caring nor observing whither chance led him.

And now chance having materialized into the form of this large black-eyed girl who wished him to eat, he would eat.

When at last they reached the little restaurant, and had sat down at a table with an almost ingen-

iously dirty cloth, the girl leaned across and said to him firmly, "Now then, Romeo, wike up and say what you want."

"I — don't want anything." He looked at her for a moment, and then added, as if the statement simplified and explained everything, "My father was hung."

She stared. "Was 'e, now? I only wish mine was. You 're in luck."

Then suddenly she turned and called loudly to the nearest waitress, "I s'y, come 'ere, 'e's fainted!"

A few minutes later Violett came to himself, to find himself lying on a sofa in a bad-smelling, dark little room, with wet hair, and brandy spilt all over him.

"Are you better?" "'E's getting 'is color back." "Poor boy!" People were talking, but it did not seem to him that they were talking about him.

Then he heard the voice of the girl who had brought him to the place.

"'E says 'is father was hung, and then off 'e goes like a blessed girl!" she ended, with a giggle in which the other girl and an old woman with a beard joined her.

"W'ere 'd you pick 'im up, Rosamund?"

"On Westminster Bridge."

"Well," she added, turning to the boy, "better?"

He sat up slowly, smiling at her. "I am — quite well, thank you. You have been very kind to me."

The three women regarded him silently. His manner was extraordinarily gentle, and yet they somehow felt that they were his inferiors.

"You must just eat a bit of something," Rosamund said tentatively. "You 're too weak to walk. You 've been ill, 'ave n't you?"

"Oh, no; I have not been ill."

He rose, and then, as he reached the door, turned. "Please come with me," he asked simply, and the girl's assurance returned with a comfortable rush. If he wanted her, she surely need n't be afraid of him.

Veal, roasted and then set afloat in a small sea of strange gravy, was what they ate, and porter was what they drank.

"What 's your name?"

Violett laid down his fork and looked at her. "Violett Maule. My father was hung, don't you remember?"

Rosamund shook her head. "Maule? No. It was n't 'im as cut up the lydy in the lodgings at Rotherhithe?"

"No. He killed my little cousin Alice — poisoned her with sugar — for her money. It was a long time ago."

He told the tragic story so quietly, so simply, that the girl stared at him, not in the least knowing how to take it.

"Did 'e, now?" she said at last. "Poisoned a little girl! Oh, Gawd!"

Violett started. It was Maud Courtenay's expression, and brought back to him with fearful distinctness the scene of the supper.

"To-day," he said, a moment later, "is my wedding day."

Rosamund set down her glass. She was afraid of crazy people. Then the extreme youth of the boy, the childishness of his helpless manner, the expression in his hopeless eyes, reassured her.

"Your wedding day! Oh, come!"

"It is. Indeed it is. Or I mean it was. She would n't marry me, of course."

"Why of course? What *do* you mean?"

"I mean on account of my father," Violett explained patiently.

"Oh, rot!" Rosamund rose and stood looking down at him. "What 's your father got to do with you? I'll pay, if you 'll give me the money. Got any?"

The boy pulled out a handful of silver, among which a sovereign gleamed. It was the money for the journey home. The girl paid, gave him the change, and led him out into the rainy evening.

"Reely, now, was it your wedding day?"

"Yes. Why should I say so if it was n't? Oh — what 's this — what 's this place?" Catching at his companion's arm, he stared up at the glare of electric lights on the great door.

"That 's the Frivolity; you don't know *nothin'*, do you?"

"Let 's go in."

Rosamund was delighted.

The theatre was full of people. On the stage a man was just ending a song, amid much applause.

Violett sat down in silence. In a minute he would see Minnie. And Minnie came and sang, with five other girls. They wore short pink gowns and great black hats that flopped quaintly as they sang. They were much painted, but Minnie looked desperately ill.

Her thin voice, sweet as that of a bird, rose and fell on the smooth waves of the orchestra. She was something so wonderful, so perfect, that the boy felt a stir of consolation at his heart.

Of course such a creature could not marry a man whose father had been hanged. He had lost not a possibility, a reality; he had awakened from a dream.

"Like 'em?" asked Rosamund, with a wink. But he did not hear her.

On Minnie's left hand something sparkled.

II

Rosamund Rundle did her best for Violett. The boy, in his strange, passive condition, might easier have fallen into worse hands than hers.

For a week she looked after him, taking him home to her poor rooms and giving him her bed, sleeping herself on the floor on a borrowed mattress. She made him eat, she made him walk, she made him talk.

He was as biddable as a good child, obeying her with unquestioning docility, but there was no rebound in him. He had never, since they left the theatre, taken the initiative in anything. Something in him seemed broken. Like a watch with a snapped mainspring, as long as she wound, he went, but when she stopped, he was motionless. Patiently she made him tell her about Minnie, about his engagement, and about the final rupture.

She learned, with the keen-wittedness of her kind, that Maud Courtenay was at the bottom of it; that she still loved Violett in her way, and that d'Orsay wanted Minnie.

Rosamund herself did not admire Minnie; she was too pale and thin for the big, robust girl's taste. But d'Orsay she had once seen in a play, and was, by her own admiration for the polite villain's curls

and deep voice, convinced that Minnie, too, was not unappreciative of these charms.

"Of course she 'll marry 'im, though why 'e wants the like of 'er, only Gawd knows! Vi'lett ought to 'ave 'ad 'er; 'e 's 'er kind."

In the girl's mind there was a deep sense of the fitness of things.

Violett, she realized, was much more likely to make a good husband than the big actor ; but even as she appreciated her protégé's good qualities, she smiled at his youthfulness and what she called, with a tenderness not without a touch of the maternal, his silly ways.

"You must go back to your island, Vi'lett," she told him one evening, as they sat by the window, he watching her expend much energy on sewing a button on her boot.

He shook his head.

"London 's no place for you."

Violett smiled at her, again shaking his head.

"But it ain't. Why, look 'ere, what are you going to do when your money's all gone? You've only got a little left."

"It does n't make any difference, Rosamund."

The girl bit off her thread with a vicious snap of her strong teeth.

"Does n't make any difference! Got any more at 'ome?"

There was a short pause, during which Violett closed his eyes.

"I have a lot of money," he said at last. "I don't know how much, but I think it must be about five thousand pounds."

The girl's shoe was large, and it fell to the floor with a loud noise.

"Five thous— you 're dotty!"

"No, I 'm not. It is about that. It 's the money that belonged to the little girl my father poisoned."

There was something rather terrible in the quiet with which the words crossed his lips. He had been so dreadfully ashamed of his father's crime all his life; he had tried to avoid thinking of it; he had never looked it straight in the face before. But now the worst had happened, and in the misery to which the crime had brought him the crime itself seemed almost commonplace to him.

Rosamund argued with him for an hour, — if a one-sided flow of unopposed opinion can be called argument.

He could not touch the money. It was not that he would not; the matter was simplified to him by the utter impossibility of his ever doing so.

At length the girl rose. "Well, I 'm going out. I 've got to buy me a hat; I could n't go to the factory to-morrow with *that* old thing."

"The factory?"

Violett turned from the window and looked at her, vaguely disturbed.

"I told you twicet that I'd got a plice in a paper-box factory. Did you think I lived on a pension from the Queen for good conduct?" She whirled around, pinned on her despised headgear, and ran downstairs.

It was a warm evening in February; the window was open, and the air that stole in across the roofs was moist and mild. The quiet roar of the busy streets nearest at hand had grown to silence to the boy's accustomed ears. He leaned forward and watched a baby being undressed by its mother in a neighboring window. It was a fat baby with crooked red legs, and a friz of curls standing erect on its crown. He could see it laugh as the mother danced it up and down. At another window a man sat, his elbows on the sill, smoking. The smoke hung like a cloud in the heavy air. A cat crept dainty-pawed from one window to another. The quiet of evening was yet unbroken by the return home of most of the people, whose loud voices would shatter it.

And chimney-pots have a beauty of their own, standing grimly against the sky, acres of them.

Violett's was the gift of seeing beauty in his surroundings, and he loved the quiet prospect before him as much as he loved anything now. It

was so still. The people he saw were far away, and they did not know him; they did not know that his father had been hanged.

There was a geranium in a window off to his left, not a glaring red flower like a trumpet tone, but a soft pink one. While the boy sat there, an old woman came and watered the flower tenderly, poking up the earth about its root with a bit of stick. She did it as Agnes had done long ago, before she was blind. Poor Agnes! Poor Michael!

He had not written to the old people, nor thought much of their anxiety over his non-appearance. That he had accepted as he had his own misery, — as inevitable. He was vaguely sorry for it, but that was all. The wet leaves of the humble flower, so full, in the place it filled in the old woman's life, of poetry, gleamed a little through the haze.

Suddenly a sound stole softly across the intervening expanse of roofs — a sound at which the boy's face changed wonderfully. It was music: splendid, heavenly music, that grew and swelled and diminished and grew again; music that was gray and green and cream-white, lit by sunlight and darkened by hallowed shadow, — *the Song of the Sea!*

Violett rose and stood listening. It was his "Song of the Sea," the song that had come to him years ago, that night in bed, after the first touch

of his hands to a piano; the song that he had sung back to the sea in the dusk of dawn; the song that he had lost for days — or was it years?

But it was not borne to him on the clean-cut, liquid notes of a piano; it came on the golden strands of string music, — violins and a 'cello.

III

DRAWN by the magic of his own music, Violett stepped from his window to the damp roof and passed half a dozen houses to his left: he passed the cat, sitting demurely under a chimney, licking its paws; he passed the pink geranium; he passed the baby's window, and heard the crooning mother inside the room. All these things, seen and heard subconsciously, were a part of the song.

The sea was about him; its voice was calling him.

The windows from which the music came were lighted, the only ones in sight that were not gray with the dusk. They were also hung with muslin curtains.

Violett went quietly to one and looked in. It was a room belonging to poor people, but it was a pleasant one, and bore an air of distinction in its simple furnishings. Around a large table in its centre, three men were sitting, sheets of manuscript music propped up against the lamp that shed its light on their earnest faces as they played.

Two were old, the 'cellist and one of the violinists. The other man, also playing on a violin, was young, and had a white flower in his shabby coat.

There was a jug with several roses in it on an-

other table; books; a table set for supper with a white cloth and gleaming silver forks in the background; and around and above and under — the "Song of the Sea."

Violett was born to love the cold piano tones better than any, in spite of the penetrating beauty of those of strings, and he missed them.

The song as it was played was too warm, too thick. It wanted the limpidity of cold water and piano notes.

But oh, the wonder of it!

The boy stood looking in, not thinking to stay beyond the lamplight, his head high, his eyes splendid with ecstasy. Then something went wrong. The music went on, faultless, beautiful, clear; but it was not the " Song of the Sea."

It grew loud, conventionally tumultuous, and then melted to a fictitious hushedness. And the color had changed from sea-color to yellow, — a tender, pale gold, the color of ripe wheat, beautiful, but not sea-color.

"That is wrong!" said Violett suddenly but quite confidently, leaning into the room.

The apparition of his thin young face, hung round with elf-like locks of black hair, brought the music to an abrupt close.

"What 's wrong?" asked the old violinist, his bow still poised over the strings.

"The music. The last part is n't the 'Song of the Sea' at all!"

The three men stared at each other. "The 'Song of the Sea'! How do you know it 's the 'Song of the Sea'?" asked the youngest, with a strong foreign accent.

Violett laughed at the absurd question. "How do I know? Well, you see, it came to me first."

"It came to you? What do you mean?" The 'cellist rose and went to the window, after laying his 'cello carefully upon his chair.

Violett liked him.

"I mean — I heard it in the night. I suppose you 'd say I composed it."

The old man raised his white eyebrows in a funny, irregular way, and wiped his musical and gleaming brow on his handkerchief. "You composed it?"

"Oh, come, now," called the foreigner gayly, "dat is a little too strong!"

"The 'Song of the Sea' was written by Sonnenthal," the old 'cellist added.

Violett flushed. "No. I — it is mine. And you don't play it right," he persisted.

The second old man, who had been carefully resining his bow, turned with a significant wink to the young one.

"Well, well, suppose you come in and tell us

how you happened to write Sonnenthal's 'Symphonic Poem.'"

Violett stepped over the sill into the room. "It is n't a — a poem. It 's a song, and it is n't — that man's."

His old dislike for Sonnenthal came back to him suddenly.

"You better have him up before ze beak," proposed the youngest of the musicians in his careful slang.

Violett paid no attention to him.

"Play it again! I 'll tell you where it ends and something else begins."

"We are too shy to play for such a distinguished composer," jeered the Pole.

But the two old men watched the boy kindly.

"Play, Pidgeon," proposed the violinist. "Come, Petrovsky."

And they played. Then, just as they began what they called the Rondo, Violett held up his hand.

"There! *that* is something else. Can't you *hear* that it is n't the sea any more? Why, it is n't even green."

Pidgeon's eyebrows wriggled again. "Can you play the violin?" he asked.

"No. I can play the piano."

Petrovsky burst out laughing.

"Bien! Then play! The piano is behind your Altesse Royale."

The boy turned. Dark and shapeless in the gloom, one or two gleams of light from the lamp falling athwart its mystery, stood a grand piano, the first one he had seen for years.

And in the great clumsy box, tight shut and solemn, were hidden all the beauty, all the joy of life.

Struck by the look in the boy's face, old Pidgeon rose and opened the instrument.

And the keys, shining in the light which the 'cellist's fat body had kept at bay until he rose, drew Violett's hands, as cold as they, to the splendid responsiveness of their greeting.

He struck, very softly, a chord, — the chord of shifting water, of green and gray heights and hollows, of lapping waves, of grave depths.

And misery and pain and hopelessness slipped from him as his fingers called shyly and timidly the message of the water; and as it came, haltingly but perfectly, soft but triumphant, the three men listened, silent and wondering.

"That is it," commented the Pole at last.

"Hush!" answered old Barr.

Violett played on and on, stumbling now and again, as if his fingers themselves wondered at the sounds they evoked.

It was imperfect, strange, awkward, and wonderful. At length he paused. "Don't you hear?"

Barr nodded. "I hear — something. What is your name?"

Violett rose abruptly. "I am Violett Maule. My father killed a little girl and was hung," he said.

There was a short silence. Then the Pole, whose eyes were full of tears, laid his hand on his arm. "Never mind your name, or what your father killed," he cried warmly.

"Tell me, Violett Maule," asked Pidgeon practically, "did you ever see Sonnenthal?"

"Yes. He married a lady I know — Miss Rose Carstairs. I saw him twice — or three times."

"H 'm ! Ever play for him?"

"Yes — no. I tried, and could n't."

"Then where did he get hold of your song?"

Violett laughed. "Miss Rose loved it. Tell me, — do you know Mr. Sonnenthal?"

Pidgeon laughed. "Do I know him? Not I. He 's a great man, Sonnenthal; we are small fry."

The young Pole frowned. "I have met him. And I have met his wife, poor thing."

"Where — is Miss Rose?"

"They live in Kensington."

"Play it again, lad, your sea song," suggested Barr, sitting down and nursing his violin lovingly.

"I must go. Rosamund will be anxious."

"Rosamund?"

"Yes. I have been with her. She has taken care of me. She is very good."

The Pole gave a short laugh, and then stopped abruptly. "Come, play it just once more."

It was one o'clock before Violett left the room. The moon had risen and the roof-world was beautiful.

And the magic of the music the trio of friends had played for him hung like the moonlight over everything.

IV

ROSAMUND'S pleasure in the extraordinary change that had taken place in Violett was not unnaturally tinged with contempt.

He had heard music, he had touched a piano, and had come back to her rooms in a sort of trance of ecstasy, as incomprehensible to the girl as had been his former condition of apathetic misery.

"Music — well, I 'm glad you enjoyed your evening," she said, as she lit her candle preparatory to going to her mattress in the next room, "but I 'll be — blowed if I can see what difference music can mike to any one."

Violett did not sleep, but being awake was bliss. The quiet hours trooped by to a great hushed march of triumph; each striking of a near church clock was a white milestone on the road to morning, and in the morning there was more music.

The world was full of music, and nothing else mattered!

When at last the dim day dawned, the boy rose quietly, and without disturbing Rosamund dressed and went out into it. It was very early, even for the poor. The first person he met was a man going home, a faded yellow rose hanging limp in his coat.

The second wayfarer was a beggar, who asked

for a penny. Violett looked at him vaguely, as he gave him the money, and wondered why the man was unhappy. There was music in the world!

With the instinct born in him, the boy made his way to the nearest water, — the river. Brown and sullen it swept under a great bridge, wisps of fog hanging over it, the light that was coming to the sky reflected faintly on its glassy surface. Violett leaned over the parapet and tried to hear the sound of its rushing, but wagons and carts rattled and groaned behind him.

"It is music, though," he thought.

Conscious of hunger for the first time for many days, he stopped at a coffee-stand and consumed a cup of dark brown nectar, with a large slice of ambrosia and butter.

Then, it being nearly eight o'clock, he returned to the humble home that had taken him in. Rosamund had gone to her work, leaving some coarse food for him on the table. As he looked at it he realized suddenly how great the girl's kindness had been. Tears rushed to his eyes.

And Agnes! And Michael! And Bob Venn! poor things, who could not fly into these exquisite azure clouds! What did they think about him, down there in their pitiful brown world? He would write Agnes. But not yet. Now the piano was waiting for him.

Stepping out upon the roof, he ran swiftly along to the magical window. As he reached it, a cross, unshaven-looking man in the next house called to him, "Hello there, sneaking into other people's windows!"

Violett turned and beamed at the poor thing with such a smile of perfect love and joy, that he was allowed to enter the room without further protestation.

It was empty. Old Pidgeon, who owned it, was a watchmaker by trade, and had gone to his shop. It was bare and shabby enough, but to Violett it was the home of melody. The piano was closed, and the joy of slowly opening it was his; the joy of peeping into the wonderful metal inside of the thing; the joy of stroking the yellowed keys softly with his hand, and then the joy of playing.

If ghosts exist, and if those of the watchmaker's daughter, to whom the instrument had been given years ago by a childless old woman who had herself played on it for years, — if pretty, silly Louisa Pidgeon's pretty, silly ghost had come back that morning, together with poor little Mouchette's, they would have held their ghostly breaths and grasped each other's ghostly hands with surprise. For Violett, alone at the piano, unwatched, unheard, as he thought, found that the thoughts and feelings that he had had of late — the happiness, the

sorrow, and now this supreme joy — had flown into the old rosewood box, to nestle among the silver strings, and prepared mysteriously in its depths, now came tumbling out over each other, pealing, wailing, shouting, in a splendid harmonized confusion comparable to nothing but the rush of the great wind through trees, the beating of waves on hard sand.

At noon Pidgeon came back.

"Well!" the old man puffed, as he entered, "the stairs is lined with people listening to you; better 'and around the 'at!"

Violett smiled. "It was splendid!" he returned simply.

"What was splendid?"

"The music."

Pidgeon shook his head ominously. "Now look 'ere, Vi'lett, don't you go an' get vain. You play very nicely *considering*, but any girl of sixteen that 's been to a school can play better than you."

"I know. Oh, I didn't mean the playing, I meant the music. It just came rushing."

The watchmaker kept him to dinner, which he cooked himself, with skill and some delicacy of taste, in his tiny kitchen.

"You must 'ave lessons in 'armony," the little man said, slicing an onion neatly.

"Harmony?"

"Yes. 'Ow to write down the music — the way Sonnenthal wrote down your 'Song of the Sea.' You can't play, but you are going to be a composer."

"Like Beethoven," agreed the boy simply.

Pidgeon laughed. "We 'll see, we 'll see! Like yourself, I 'ope."

Violett answered all his questions quite directly, telling the tale of Minnie and her defection with gentle excuses. "You see, a girl could n't stand *that*."

Pidgeon looked at him. "But it 's a very short time ago. Are n't you unhappy about her?"

Violett hesitated. "Being happy or unhappy," he answered slowly, "does n't seem to matter so much if one is in tune. I mean, happiness is major, and unhappiness minor, but one's key can be — complete — in its way, and — *right*."

Pidgeon nodded. "Yes, you are right; 'armony, inner 'armony, is the thing."

They were both silent for a few minutes.

V

PETROVSKY found Sonnenthal at the piano when he entered the Master's house a week or so after Violett's appearance in the window of Pidgeon's rooms.

The Master, as he liked to be called, sat at the far end of the long room, in a stained-glass alcove, through which a mesh of glowing color fell on his plump figure and smooth, fat face.

The years were said to have dealt kindly with Félix Sonnenthal. His face bore no lines, his hair was still brown and glossy, his teeth white.

He looked distinctly younger than he was, but one close observer knew that his face should have had lines, — lines of thought, of work, of struggle with himself, the lines that every middle-aged face should bear; and — they were not there.

People who remembered the man as he had been ten years before, his fits of moody silence, his uneven temper, considered that he had improved.

"He is *so* much more pleasant, my dear," one of these observers said to Rose Sonnenthal, "so much more comfortable, and it must be your influence; you must be very proud."

And the great man's wife smiled and said nothing. She had followed, step by step, the gradual

deterioration of her husband's character, — the easy relinquishing of the rudder he had once tried to hold, the encroachment of the *laisser aller* that is so fatal to people who have the artistic temperament.

She knew that the moody temper, the flashes of anger of the old days, had meant, at least, a resentment against the usurpation of the worse half of his nature, and that the easy good temper that was now his was the outward expression of an utter indifference to right and wrong other than as social assets.

And her face bore the lines that his lacked. She had lived and suffered for two.

Sonnenthal smiled when he recognized his guest. "Bon jour, bon jour!" he cried gayly, without ceasing to play. "If you mention concerts to me, I will wring your neck!"

"I shall not mention concerts, Maestro. I come on other grounds," returned the younger man, laughing.

The velvety fingers played with the notes as a kitten does with a rosebud, and then with a little whirr tossed them away — into memory.

"You look very solemn. Take a cigarette." Sonnenthal rose from the piano and lay down on a low divan covered with a white bearskin.

"Solemn? Well — perhaps. It is about your sea symphony."

"My sea poem? Et — après?"

"Après, — it has another claimant."

Sonnenthal laughed. "Not really! Who?"

"A boy — a queer creature, I think a little touched, and quite undoubtedly a bit of a genius. He used to know Mrs. Sonnenthal. Violett Maule is his name."

With a grunt of amusement at his own difficulty, the Master rolled over and sat up. "Maule! Ah, yes, I remember. So he says he wrote my music?"

Petrovsky laughed. "No. He says that *you* wrote his music."

"And you believe him?"

"I never believe anything, Maestro. But I warn you. He will make trouble for you."

Then Sonnenthal understood, and rising, smiled.

"You charming boy, how much do you want?"

The Pole was attempting a little vicarious blackmail without a qualm, but in cheery cynicism he was no match for the man whose delicate interpretation of Chopin had won him renown all the world over.

"How much — what?" he stammered.

"How much — pounds, shillings, pence?"

"Then — Maule's story is true?"

The Master lay flat on his back, looking up through a cloud of smoke.

"True? That the melody is his — yes. That the Poème Symphonique is his — jamais de la vie, mon cher!" Curiously enough, musician though the man was, he still said, "Chamais te la fie."

"The fact remains, as you say. The melody — the whole first movement — is his. He is going to claim it."

"He will make himself famous," replied the older man, with a shrug, "but that will not hurt me."

Suddenly Petrovsky lost his patience. "It will hurt you," he said angrily. "He has witnesses. Your wife is one of them."

The shot told.

Sonnenthal jumped up and threw down his cigarette. "My wife — did he tell you this?"

"Yes. You laugh at me, but I wanted to warn you."

"Then — it was not you? I am glad, Lao."

The Pole winced at the kindness in the tone of the man who had helped him.

"You had no right to think that," he retorted angrily. "I will go now."

Sonnenthal took a check-book from the drawer of a table in the corner.

"Keep it quiet, Lao. It was nothing as I found it, — a simple melody. My wife used to sing it — I made it great."

"Ah, yes; you hatched the egg, but it is his, and he knows it."

It was kinder to spare the Master the knowledge of his, Lao's, dishonesty; it would hurt the Master to know.

"He is clever enough, but he wants a tall sum for his wares — a hundred pounds."

Sonnenthal wrote the check in silence. It was one of the disagreeable surprises of life, that was all, — a stone in the runner's sandal.

VI

MRS. SONNENTHAL stood at the door of Albert Hall, waiting for her carriage. The concert had been a great success; the audience, chiefly composed of women, was most enthusiastic; the programme, wisely composed of all sorts of music, with just the right preponderance of Chopin, played from beginning to end with neatness and poetry.

And the artist's wife listened with a little smile of melancholy amusement to the remarks made as people crowded out into the street. It was a great success, oh, yes, and Félix would come home contented and hungry.

With his characteristic cynical audacity Sonnenthal had put on his programme that day his piano arrangement of the sea poem, and though his wife knew nothing of Violett's appearance in London, she had listened to it with quiet horror. It had meant so much to her, Sonnenthal's appropriation of the beautiful melody. His doing so had been the cause of her first admitting to herself the fact of his moral faultiness.

But he had played it to-day — *how* he had played it!

"Wasn't that too lovely — the sea poem!" a woman behind her exclaimed suddenly.

"He is a great genius. Since I heard the thing years ago, I cannot hear the sea without its beating this thing of Sonnenthal's into my ears."

"Yes. It really is the sea's voice."

They had passed, and Mrs. Sonnenthal's footman had found her.

As she went out of the door, some one touched her arm.

"Miss Rose!"

The pale, tall boy could be only Violett. With a frightened blush, she shook hands with him.

"You here! In London!"

"I — live here now. I am so glad to see you — Mrs. Sonnenthal."

For some reason it was distasteful to her to have him call her by her husband's name. "Call me 'Miss Rose,'" she said hurriedly. "You must come to see me — that is" —

They had reached her carriage.

"Violett, come home with me *now!*"

The boy obeyed gladly, and sat down by her in her brougham.

"I have a piano," he began at once, "and — I am learning to play. I am going to be a composer."

"You — but tell me all about it."

She was sorry now that she had brought him. Félix would not like it; and Violett *must* have

noticed that the *motif* of Sonnenthal's elaborate sea poem was the old "Song" that years before the little brown boy had played to the dreamy-eyed girl in the old rectory drawing-room.

"So I am learning. I live with Mr. Pidgeon now, and he plays to me on his violin, but I like the piano best" —

"Mr. Pidgeon? Oh, yes."

Then she asked for news of Agnes and Michael, and he told her of a letter he had had that morning. Michael had an assistant now, and they missed Violett, and was he soon coming home?

"But I shall stay here until I have learned a great deal. I was at the concert to-day. I heard Mr. Sonnenthal. I cried," he added.

When the little house in South Kensington was reached, Rose took the boy to her morning-room and rang for tea.

Violett stood by the fire, his eyes studying the appointments of the charming room. Suddenly he exclaimed, —

"He played my 'Song of the Sea.' Do you remember?"

She started. "Yes — I remember."

"Mr. Pidgeon and the two others play it on violins, but — it is better on the piano."

"I — think so too."

The man brought in tea, and when he had gone,

the poor woman went on, "He of course changed it a great deal, Violett, and — made it much more beautiful. It is hardly the same thing now."

"The melody is the same thing. That could not change, you know."

She paused in her occupation of pouring tea in the delicate cups, and looked up at him.

"But — you don't *mind*, do you? I mean, you don't mind his using it?" And then she felt the danger of her admission, and wished that she had not spoken.

"Mind?" The boy hesitated. "I am not sure. It *was* mine, and I am going to be a composer, you know. I should have liked to — to make it into music myself."

As he finished, he noticed her face, and came a sudden step nearer.

"But I don't care, Miss Rose. No, really, I do not. You like it better this way, and so do I."

"But, Violett — do you understand — if you *tell* — it will be — it will" —

And Violett, kneeling down by her, laid his long hands on hers, as hers wrung each other helplessly.

"I know. I do understand. People would say — that — I will not tell, Miss Rose, never. Only, don't look like that."

And she accepted his sacrifice, and let him pro-

mise, because she loved, even while she despised, her husband.

"Even to him, Violett — you will not mention it? You see — he heard it so long ago — I suppose he thinks it all his own."

Violett looked at her gravely and rose. He recognized the lie.

"I think he knows," he returned, gently uncompromising, "but I 'll not mention it to him."

When Sonnenthal came in, half an hour later, and his wife introduced her visitor to him, he started, and gave a short laugh. Then he held out his hand, and with a sarcastic enthusiasm at which Violett was surprised, welcomed him to his house.

"I hear that you are a genius," he began, sitting down and ringing.

The boy did not answer. He disliked Sonnenthal, quite apart from the matter of the sea song. His intense sensitiveness had told him long ago that Rose was unhappy, and now it told him that in spite of her unhappiness her husband had influenced her. And he wished to go, and was uncertain whether his immediate departure might not hurt his hostess.

Sonnenthal was amused by the boy's audacity, as he considered it, in coming to the house of the man he was blackmailing.

"Were you at my concert?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes."

"Did you like it?"

"Yes."

Sonnenthal smiled at him, and added a dash of brandy to his soda.

"What did you think of the sea poem?"

Violett looked at him thoughtfully for a second. Then he answered, "I think it very beautiful."

And his apparent self-control delighted Sonnenthal.

"Good! Let 's go into the next room, and you shall play to me."

But Violett refused. It was late, and he must go home.

Mrs. Sonnenthal accompanied him to the stairs, and as she gave him her hand, whispered, "Thank you, Violett."

VII

VIOLETT told no one of his visit to the Sonnenthals. He deeply regretted, in the light of recent events, that he had already told the three musicians of his claim to Sonnenthal's melody, and now it seemed to him best to let the matter be forgotten.

Petrovsky had been away, but old Barr and Mr. Pidgeon played together very frequently, and Violett, at the piano, was rapturous. A month passed, and then a most wonderful thing happened.

One day Mrs. Sonnenthal sent a note to Violett, asking him to come to see her that afternoon. The carriage was at the door when he arrived; and, telling him that she had some errands to do, she bade him follow her into it, and they sped away to the shops.

They went to one where clothes were sold, and she bought two suits for the boy. Then a hat, boots, and wonderful linen and socks. Even gloves and handkerchiefs were not forgotten. It was conscience money that she was spending. She knew that she owed him a great debt, and in this way she tried to pay him.

He accepted her gifts with great joy and grati-

tude, but without the least hesitation. She was Miss Rose, and he Violett. Neither of them mentioned the "Song of the Sea," and the boy had indeed almost forgotten it, otherwise than as something in connection with which he had been able to do a favor to Miss Rose.

He was not ambitious, and since he had lived with Pidgeon had been as happy as a bee in a garden. That is surely all that any one can wish.

Clad in a well cut gray suit, with a soft hat and brown gloves, simply vain of his fine appearance, Mr. Maule, as Rose declared she must now call him, drove home with Mrs. Sonnenthal, and went with her into the drawing-room.

"You know," he said seriously, gazing at himself in a mirror, "I think I look almost like a gentleman now."

Rose laughed with an enjoyment not felt by her for weeks. "You are a dear! Now play to me."

And Violett played, for they were alone. He played as he never had before, for behind him lay six weeks of hard work, and a wave of inspiration caught him and tossed him heavenward.

When at length he broke off, Sonnenthal stood by him.

"That was splendid! Shake hands with me." The great man's face looked less pleasant than usual, and was therefore much more pleasing.

"You are going to be a musician, and I am going to help you."

Violett's helpless face amused while it puzzled him.

"Oh, I know — you do not like me. But neither do I like you. You yourself may go to the devil for all I care, but — your music must be saved. So I am going to give you lessons."

Mrs. Sonnenthal had drawn nearer. "Violett, why don't you thank him? He has never given lessons to any one."

But the Master, good-naturedly attributing the boy's embarrassment to remorse, waved her aside.

"I want no thanks. It will not be amusing, *que diable*, to be my pupil, but I will drag it out of you, the music. Now go, and come here to-morrow at ten."

Violett gave a little nervous shiver. Sonnenthal was personally repugnant to him. He hated the thought of coming into frequent contact with him. And then the man's own remark, "You yourself may go to the devil, but your music" — "Thank you," he said, taking up his hat; "it is very good of you." Then he went home.

VIII

It was a curious alliance, that between Sonnenthal and Violett. The personal antipathy of each for the other, confronted by their mutual musical sympathy, tried hard to efface itself, and succeeded only in hiding behind backs, so to say.

Sonnenthal naturally added to his old distaste for the boy a scorn for the supposed blackmailer, while Violett — feeling more and more, as time went on, how his master's inherent falsity had influenced the once beautifully upright Rose, — still shivered uncomfortably at the very sound of his voice.

Yet, bound by their great tie, the two gave each other their best; they worked together with that steady enthusiasm that can accomplish such wonders, and eagerly they watched the wonder grow.

Violett learned with a surprising rapidity, and anything that he learned was his for the rest of his life.

After a few weeks of daily lessons, Sonnenthal bade him, with the new gruffness that his wife so loved, to pack up all his belongings and come to live in his house. "I must be near you; it must be one long lesson," he added, and Violett obeyed, with a perfunctory expression of thanks. He loved

living with Pidgeon, and he would hate being under the same roof with Sonnenthal; but he came at once, telling old Pidgeon, in the same passive obedience to Sonnenthal, merely that he was going away for a time. The great man had said, "I wish no one to know that you are my pupil; I should be tortured with applications, so hold your tongue."

Upstairs in his room, the boy had an upright piano, and here it was that he did his work. Rising every day at dawn, he went for a walk, creeping down the dark stairs into the gray streets, and after an hour's wandering, during which he saw little and heard much, returned to breakfast.

Then came work until noon, a sleep, according to orders, more work, a drive or a walk, and late in the afternoon Sonnenthal played for him. It was an hour for which many people would have paid many pounds, but to the obscure boy it was not all pleasure.

Sonnenthal put his soul, such as it was, into his music, and Violett, hearing the weakness and discords of that soul through the strength and beauty of the music, was hurt as much as he was made happy by it.

And always, when music was not the business of the moment, the boy avoided the man, and the man avoided the boy. Sonnenthal, quite unashamed of his theft of the melody, a theft so intangible as

to be almost none, thought that he read in Violett's eyes a constant memory of it; while Violett, remembering his promise to Rose, but rarely recalling the reason for the promise, was uncomfortable in the man's presence chiefly because he disliked him, and helplessly resented Rose's love for him who was so greatly her inferior.

One morning in June Violett was taking his walk. It was the beginning of a beautiful day, and the trees in the park, washed with a gentle rain in the night, were crisp and green against the pale sky.

Violett was very happy. In a week Sonnenthal and his wife were going to the sea, and the evening before, Rose had told the boy that he was to go with them.

The thought of being again by the water, of sitting in warm sand and listening to the waves, was a delight. After all, people were very kind to him. Sonnenthal knew about his father, and did not care. Violett wished he could like Sonnenthal; gratitude is bitter where no love can be.

But he could play now; he was working at a tough problem of Bach's, and the beauty of it began to shine through; and then a new song in his own mind was almost ready to come to his fingers, — a soft, lonely melody, as the sky seen through bare boughs.

Suddenly, in one of the most beautiful parts of the park, he turned a corner, and there was Minnie, — Minnie wrapped in a little shawl, though it was so warm; Minnie in a flat hat on which bloomed the one rose in the world.

"Stevie!"

"Minnie!"

They stood staring at each other for a second, and then he turned and walked into paradise with her.

"How long is it?" he asked at length.

"Oh — very long. Are you — are you well?"

He laughed. "Well? Oh, yes. And you? No, Minnie, you are not well, you are *ill*."

She did not deny it.

"It has been warm — and I 've hurt my arm."

He saw that her delicate little arm was in a stiff bandage and hung in a sling, and his heart seemed to stand quite still.

"How — what was it?" he asked when he could get his breath.

She flushed. "I — I fell downstairs. I 'm living in —— Street, now, you know."

Violett did not know; he knew nothing.

"I 'm married," she went on hurriedly, sitting down on a bench, and stooping to tie her shoe.

"To — Mr. d'Orsay?"

"Yes. 'Is name 's Dunn."

"Oh!" There was a short silence, while Violett watched a fat robin eat a fat worm, and wondered how he could have lived without knowing that she was married. What had he been doing on her wedding day?

"Stevie — have you forgiven me?" And oh, the little catch in her voice!

"I had n't anything to forgive you for, Minnie. It was — impossible, and I ought to have known it."

"It would n't 'ave been impossible if I had n't been — a fool."

The bitterness in her voice was so unchildlike and so new that the boy turned and looked at her.

"Oh, Min, don't cry!"

The tears stood still on her curved lashes, and she tried to smile, to comfort him. "I — am tired, Stevie, that 's all."

"But, Minnie — you are happy?"

He watched her anxiously as she answered, —

"Oh, *that!* Yes, of course I 'm 'appy."

He told her about his music, that he was living with Sonnenthal, that he was going to the sea.

Then she told him that Sam was very good to her, *that* fond of 'er, that she was of course not singing now, because of her arm, that Sam had no employment at present, but the prospect of something very fine for the autumn.

And now the sun was out in all his glory, and the trees sparkled, and the robins dug fresh pink worms out of the silvery grass.

Minnie, who would not let Violett accompany her home, told him that she came every morning for a walk in the park, as she slept very badly and the air did her good. Then they parted, and Violett flew back to his piano, and in its wonderful responsiveness it sang to him all the bliss of the morning.

"What 's that you 're playing?" Sonnenthal asked, coming in suddenly.

"It 's — I don't know."

The Master sat down at the table. "Well, play it again and I 'll scratch it down for you."

As he did so he watched Violett. He had never mentioned the blackmailing to the boy. If he did so, he thought it would be impossible to continue the relations it pleased him to maintain with his protégé. And now he was wondering whether Violett was not ashamed, and congratulating himself on the fact that after all the benefits received at his hands, the boy could never in any way use his knowledge about the most famous of all the Master's compositions.

There is now, much played by orchestras, a beautiful symphonic poem by Félix Sonnenthal called "A Morning Walk."

IX

THE beauty of dawn and its succeeding hour is such that those who know and love it must wonder that these hours are wasted by almost every one.

The praise of moonlight and of starlight is sung by the most unpoetic, and even prosaic lovers prefer to meet in the evening rather than at broad noon or staring three o'clock.

But the wonderful, ethereal, breathless charm of the early morning is better than that of evening. The baby day is winsome as it opens its sleepy eyes, and worldly troubles and worries seem smaller then than at any other hour.

Violett, a musician and a lover, met Minnie every morning under the wise old trees in the park, and every minute he passed with her was an eternity of happiness.

The young woman herself, so much wiser in worldly things, wondered at him. There was no jealousy in him; none of the misery she would have expected. She was his for that one hour, and he was satisfied.

At first, to try him, she had talked of her husband, telling how happy they were together. And then Violett's unselfish contentment disarmed her,

and she gave herself up to the pleasure of being with him.

He had improved in every way, and her poor, sordid little heart rejoiced in his good clothes, in the careless way he wore his hat, in his neat nails. She was proud of him.

"I am sorry you are going away, Stevie," she said on the third morning after their first meeting. "I shall miss you."

"I shall miss you, too, Min. Why won't you let me come to see you?"

"Because — we 'ave such a small room. It 's uncomfortable for visits."

"Oh! You don't *like* it?"

Something like horror was in his voice, as he thought of his luxurious little nest at Sonnenthal's.

"Like it?" Minnie hesitated for a minute. Should she play on his pity? No. "It is our *home*, Stevie, so of course we love it," she answered with a real dignity behind the assumed.

"Well — why may n't I come? I — I should like to tell Mr. — Dunn that I am sorry I used to not like him."

"Do you like him now?"

Violett turned his eyes full on her, while he reflected. She could almost see his thoughts at work.

"I like him for making you happy, Minnie."

And she turned to hide the twist of her mouth. There was something so childlike, so innocent in his love for her, that in spite of his year or more of seniority, a feeling almost maternal prompted her to preserve it.

Minnie had grown old suddenly.

Once as they sat together at the edge of a winding bridle-path, watching the sun's upward progress behind big tree trunks, velvety with recent rain, she asked him the question that she had been pondering ever since their first morning meeting, —

"Stevie — did you care much?"

"Yes, I cared. A great deal, Min."

His face was so calm and unmoved that in spite of her good resolutions the girl went on, —

"How did you — get over it so quickly?"

"But I have n't got over it."

Her painted face flushed. "I mean — you are happy now? Without me?"

"I am happy. Yes. You — are n't afraid of me any more, Min."

And she understood.

"If I had n't been afraid then, that evening, Stevie — I 'd 'ave been — your wife now."

He did not answer.

"I 'd 'ave been *your* wife."

"Yes. But — of course you could n't, dear; I understand. It is too — horrible. Your liking me

again and not minding is almost too good to be true."

His short upper lip was shaded with a soft down, she noticed as he spoke, and he had grown heavier. His hands were muscular, and the carriage of his head less dreamy and more assured. He wore a white carnation in his coat.

The next morning when he came, she ran to him, her hands outstretched.

"Stevie, don't go away!"

"Away?"

"I mean to the sea. I want you."

He took her hands in his and swung them lightly to and fro. "You want me, Min?"

"Yes."

"Then — I 'll stay."

And he stayed, accepting Sonnenthal's anger and Rose's reproaches with gentle determination.

The day after their departure, he went as usual to the park at dawn, but Minnie did not come.

The morning was very long, and for the first time he realized how utterly he depended on her; how empty the world was without her. He knew this; he saw that the shadows were darker, the sunlight paler, the birds less joyous, the air less sweet, and yet he did not guess why.

And when she came across the silvery grass under the oaks, the next day, her small white

face shadowed by a big hat, he did not know why everything became in a heart-beat so sublimely beautiful.

She, of course, knew. Her dark eyes glowed as she watched him, and with a delicious pang she realized why it was that their meeting eyes held the sun.

And her delicate lips quivered with a half maternal mockery of his innocence.

They wandered about in the greenness; they fed the swans; they sat hand in hand on rustic benches and watched children playing on the grass.

And every day the wonder of meeting came to pass.

The world was pulsing with harmony for Violett, but he did not touch his piano during that week; the music was everywhere about him.

It was not he who touched the wrong note that brought jarring discord into the whole.

On the last and the fairest morning of the week the two were sitting on the bench near where they had first met, talking of the old days by the sea.

Minnie's wan little hand lay idly in the boy's, but their talk was of sand houses and wading; of the color of the sea music and the rushing of sudden storms.

"Do you remember"—

"*Do* I remember?"

And thus d'Orsay found them.

What he said does not matter. It was the foul-mouthed accusation of a half-drunken scoundrel mad with jealousy. Minnie, trembling and crying, shrank away into the shrubbery, but the boy, awakened out of his innocent dream of happiness, faced her accuser.

"Sneakin' out 'ere," went on Dunn, "to meet a little beast like you!" And then all the anger that he had ever felt in his life took possession of the murderer's son. His face lost its color, his eyes turned, and with a short yell he sprang at the bigger man, who, taken by surprise, stumbled and fell full length on the grass.

Minnie saw her champion kneel on her husband's chest; she saw the lithe, long hands fasten around Dunn's throat, and she heard Violett say — something; she could not tell what. And then suddenly Violett let go and rose.

He stood stupidly staring at the prostrate man, and then said slowly, "It was — my father — who killed. Not I."

"*Violett!*"

Minnie had never before uttered the name. He turned to her.

"I — thank you, Violett."

The boy shook his head vaguely. "He knows he lied, Minnie. And — it was my father, not I."

Minnie caught his hand. "He 's fainted, dear. Go now, and — to-morrow come in the morning."

She saw his eyes change; she saw the innocence go out of them; she saw selfishness, evil thought, and ruthlessness come into them. But she called the new look love, and crept into his arms. And by the fainting man's side he kissed her fiercely, holding her so close that she felt the pumping of his heart.

"To-morrow, yes, and every day. Come — we will go now, Min — you and I. You can't stay with him. You belong to me. You love me and I love you. He" — he touched the inanimate body scornfully with his foot — "is a beast; he does not need you."

"Yes. We will go."

He had loved her all his life, and now at last he had waked up, and she was his. He gave a loud laugh at his own silly dreaming. He had indeed slept.

Suddenly his eyes caught the crimson glow of the sun on the water. It was like blood; it was the color he hated. The wind had come up and swung the boughs above him. Where was the harmony? Where was the symphonic splendor of nature's music? It was all confusion.

And his taking Minnie meant eternal confusion, for it was not in harmony.

"I — can't do it, Minnie," he said slowly. "It would kill us both."

She stared; then she wept. "He beats me, Stevie —Violett. He threw me downstairs; he is always drinking. I can't go back."

And then Violett, who had been in a church only half a dozen times in his life, preached a sermon.

"You must. I'd rather die than let you; I think it will kill me to have you, but you must. I don't know why, but it's so. If you didn't it would be out of tune and horrible. God meant it so."

Then he kissed her hands, and ran across the sward to the nearest park entrance. He told a policeman that a man had fainted, and then slowly went home. The crimson light faded as he went.

X

When a small cloud creeps across a sunny sky, its little shadow skimming over the placid world below; when a puff of wind stirs quiet leaves with ominous caprice; when a dark note occurs in the summer harmony; when, in a word, a storm begins to gather its scattered forces, its beginnings, coming singly, are so surprisingly insignificant that when the light has gone, carrying with it the brooding quiet of warm days, one looks in vain for even a bit of blueness above, a still corner below. And so it was with Violett.

He had lost Minnie; he had lost his innocence of heart; he had lost the sense of harmony that seemed music to him; and to complete his misery, he lost Rose Sonnenthal's friendship.

When he reached the villa at Eastbourne the next day, he found its mistress alone in the drawing-room, sitting idly by the window. Violett stood by the door, gazing at her with a simple revelation of his unhappiness in his eyes. She loved him; she must know that he was miserable; it was very simple.

But when she looked up, she laughed. "So you have come back! Why?"

"Why?"

"Yes. Is it music you have come for, or money?"

He stared. "What do you mean, Miss Rose?"

She laughed again.

"I mean that my husband has told me of your first communication with him."

It was an ugly laugh; for the story of the boy's supposed blackmail, an amusing incident to Sonnenthal, told in an after-dinner mood, had been another blow to her tottering faith in human nature.

Violett sat down and clasped his hands, sitting there in the nervous immobility usual to him in moments of agitation.

"Please tell me," he said slowly, "what you mean."

"I mean that your — your courage, in coming here and accepting my husband's ch — kindness, after blackmailing him, is — no less admirable than surprising."

"What is — blackmailing?"

As she leaned back in her chair, the hateful laugh once more stirring her pale lips, the door opened and Sonnenthal came in.

"À la bonheur! My dear boy, I *am* glad to see you again!"

His dark face beamed with the kindness of one delighted at feeling a sharp and useful implement

again in his unaccustomed hand. "I have missed you!"

Then suddenly turning to his wife, "Well, what 's wrong?"

"Master," asked the boy eagerly, "what is blackmailing?"

Sonnenthal smiled at him and scowled at Rose at the same time.

"So you have been doing *that*, my dear? You have told him! Never mind, Violett, it is forgiven and forgotten. You are you, and I am I; that is sufficient. Come, play for me."

"It — Félix — how *can* you? You are so good, so generous," she cried piteously, with the sad enthusiasm of one eager to admire what he loves. "No one but you could forgive" —

"Ah, bah! I want him to play. I tell you, he may do what he likes, and *I* don't care. Genius must be many-sided."

Violett, not understanding, felt that the man who was kind to him was selfish and bad; that the cruel woman was good and heartbroken in her unkindness.

"I — cannot play," he stammered.

Sonnenthal clapped him genially on the shoulder. "Nonsense! Of course you can play. Don't bother about — *that* any more."

And then, embittered and miserable as she was,

Rose Sonnenthal uttered the most cruel words of her life.

"Very well — have him play, by all means. After all, his being a blackmailer is not so surprising, — blood will tell."

Sonnenthal stared. It was uncomfortably crude of her.

"Leave the room!" he shouted angrily. "And be good enough to let me manage my own affairs without any unsolicited assistance. I have not yet reached the point where I need help from a whining fool like *you!*"

He gave a snarling laugh, and without an instant's hesitation Violett struck him, his champion and protector, across the mouth.

A minute later, a pale-faced man, with the bitterness of self-disdain in his eyes, stood on the beach listening to the beating of the inharmonious waves. It was Violett.

PART IV

I

AGNES' love for Violett was most rarely beautiful, for it was untainted by curiosity.

When he came back, broken and still, with a dazed look in his eyes, she had not a single question for him. Open arms and a silent tongue were her simple welcome, and he accepted it without a word of gratitude.

He told nothing of his recent life; she knew, for he had written occasionally, of his living with Sonnenthal, and that he was not married. She knew, too, that he had come back home with something as near to a broken heart as ever beat in a man's breast. That was all, and it was enough.

The days passed, and Violett hardly knew it. He sat for hours, without moving, in the sand, his eyes fixed on the summer ocean. His was the pain of living over and over the unchangeable.

With pulsing monotony the scenes he had lived through came back to him in ceaseless reiteration, — the beautiful morning hours with Minnie, hours white-winged and sunny, innocent as those of childhood; his joy in being with her, in gazing into the lucent depths of her sombre eyes, of touching her hand.

And then the awakening! The hideous quarrel

with d'Orsay; the still more hideous rapture of holding d'Orsay's wife to his heart; the awful confusion, his flight through the busy town. Over and over it turned in his mind like a wheel of fire.

And then Rose Sonnenthal's incomprehensible unkindness; Sonnenthal's kindness; his own love for Rose and dislike for the man. "She was cruel to me and I love her! he was kind to me and I hate him!"

His untrained mind, tortured beyond endurance, clung with weary persistence to these puzzling facts. Over and over he asked himself why he loved Rose and hated Sonnenthal.

Sometimes he fell asleep in the sun, and awoke with new strength for thought. Sometimes he went in swimming, but he could not go far, for fear of the cramp that seized him when overtired, so he sat almost all the time by the edge of the water he loved.

He was not far from madness, those long, golden summer days. And the longing for Minnie grew greater instead of less, and he knew that it was evil, and he hated it, for he was pure in heart.

Work, that greatest blessing of God, was unknown to him; he had never worked in his life, and the terribly potent demons of idleness hovered about him with unceasing energy.

When the sound of the sea at last grew from its dreadful discords into a new song, it was a song that in its beauty was far worse than the old lack of harmony. It was a song of Minnie — of the new Minnie; of the Minnie he had kissed. And it pulsed and beat in his ears until they ached. It told him of life somewhere far away, — where Minnie and he might be always together; where he would be hers and she his, and where nothing else mattered. And sometimes he would rise and look back towards the clump of wood that hid the road leading to the station.

When the moon came, the song took on new enchantments. It was the most exquisite melody in the world then, surely. And in a cloud he once saw Minnie's face.

He read no books; it was a waste of time that might be spent with Minnie. One day in September Bob Venn came over to the island, bringing a letter. When Violett caught sight of the sun on the fisherman's sail he knew that it was Bob, and that he had a letter, and that the letter was from Minnie.

When he was alone in the Cradle, he read the letter, which was written on pink paper like the inside of a shell, and which smelled like Minnie's little handkerchiefs. The scent made his head swim for a minute, but presently he could read.

DEAR VIOLETT, — Are you not going to write to me again? Where are you? Are you well? Sam was very bad; his head was hurt when he fell against the roots of the tree. He treats me very cruel. If you do not come I think I shall kill myself. I go every day to the park.

MINNIE.

The waves, breaking on the rocks below, laughed softly at his hesitation and sang, "Why not? Why not?"

And then he remembered what Rose Sonnenthal had said, "It is not surprising — blood will tell."

And the comfort of hereditary sin crept over him. He was his father's son.

He rose and went back to the house. Agnes looked up at him with her blind eyes.

"Vi'lett?"

"Yes, Agnes."

She laughed gently. "You said that just like your mother, dearie, — 'Yes, Agnes,' like a little flute!"

"Tell me about my mother."

He sat down at her feet, as he had done when a child.

"She was little and thin and gentle. She did not talk much, and her eyes were sweet, like a child's."

"Did she — love my father?"

The old woman hesitated. "Yes, she loved him."

"But she was not happy."

"No, she was not happy." In the silence the old clock ticked gravely. It must have ticked just so during her short life there. And Agnes had been there; only he, Violett, had not been there! If he had, she would have been happier. Or if she were there now, he would be happier.

"Agnes," he said at length, "when you don't know what to do, what do you do?"

The old woman laid her wrinkled hand on his head. "I pray, dearie."

The boy went slowly back to the edge of the water. He did not pray; but he did not write to Minnie, nor did he go.

That night there was a storm, and its savage splendor was grateful to him. All night he sat at the edge of the garden listening to the thumping of the monster waves on the rocks beneath. The moon was full, and its intermittent glory, shining forth from between racing cloud-rack, fell on the tumbling sea like peace on a troubled mind.

"'The face of the waters,'" Violett repeated over and over to himself, finding a vague consolation in the words.

The thought of Minnie faded as time passed. He was too tired to think of anything, and the

cooling hand of nature lay on his hot brow and quieted him.

At dawn the storm ceded to the glory of coming day, and as the sky grew full of faint color the waves sank to a quiet, slumberous movement that caressed the gleaming sand.

Violett had fallen asleep, his arms clasped about his knees.

When he awoke, he sat listening tensely for a moment, and then a happy change came to his pale young face, and his eyes filled. The "Song of the Sea" had come back to him; his troubled sound world had subsided with the waves into perfect harmony.

II

"An engigement, Miss? *You?*"

Mr. Reginald Moss knocked the ash of his cigar into a brass cup, and smiled. "Sleep 's wot you want, and Bovril, if not 'Force,' and 'igh air — I should say St. Moritz, my dear."

"Oh, rot! I can sing, if I am ill, I tell you."

"Ill? Be as ill as you like, my love, that 's no hodds. The thing you cawn't be on the stige is a living skeleton, and that 's wot you 're a-getting to be."

Minnie's eyes filled with helpless tears. "I know it. Oh, *I* know. But I can't help it, and I must live. Maud Courtenay told me to come to you."

Moss's eyes twinkled. "Maudie! Ah, that 's another thing. Maudie 's young and pretty and plump. I 'm sorry, Miss, but I tell you frankly, I cawn't do anything for you."

He was good-natured, like most people connected with the stage; and Minnie, with a touch of rouge on her haggard cheeks, was very piteous.

She rose. "I 'm two years younger than 'er," she returned drearily. "Sorry I troubled you."

She coughed a little as she went out into the November fog. For weeks she had tried to get an

engagement, and had met with rebuffs everywhere. This man Moss had been her last hope.

Her husband had gone on tour with a fairly good company, and as her money was almost at an end, she did not know what she was to do.

The irony of failing for the lack of a few pounds of flesh did not appeal to her, but she had begun to think of the river. Wrapping her thin cloak close around her, she went quickly through the crowded streets to a shop where she had a letter-box.

For weeks she had come every day, in the hope of a letter from Violett. He had not written, though her letters to him had grown to be a sort of passion; she could not refrain from writing him, and did so almost every day.

If he would come she would be happy. That was all that she knew. She was too ignorant to reason about it; she was too dull to realize that she was only dreaming impossibilities. He loved her, though he had left her, and she loved him. There are still some people primitive enough to live almost without reasoning, entirely by feeling. Minnie was one of them. Possessed by the one thing, her love for the boy she had jilted, all other things passed her by.

Entering the dingy butter and eggs shop, her pale cheeks glowed suddenly in the hope of finding

a letter. He would have touched it, his hand have written the very address, "Miss Brown."

But there was no letter, and a burden of years seemed to settle on her pinched face as she turned away.

III

DEAR MIN, — It 's no good. I ain't coming back. Our manager wants us to go to America, and I am going.

You won't care, my dear. You never cared a damn for me, and there 's no use in pretending we are n't both dead sick of each other.

We 're married fast enough, worse luck, but short of marrying some one else we can be pretty comfortable. Maudie and I get on pretty well together, and she says she would not have took up with me if she did n't know that you won't care. So good-by, and good luck to you. You can get an engagement, or that chap Adams can help you.

SAM.

Minnie read the letter twice, and then she burst out laughing. So Sam and Maud were off together. She was glad to be rid of her husband. He had ill-treated her, and she hated him more than any one in the world, except Maud. Her eyes darkened with anger. She would like to get her nails into that little beast's eyes — going off with married women's husbands! She had always known that Maud was a nasty little devil. Suddenly she began to cry, and cried until she fell asleep.

When she awoke it was evening. Dunn's letter lay on the floor by her. She picked it up and re-read it.

Then a sudden inspiration came to her; she would send it to Violett. Taking an envelope she addressed it, and then after a moment's reflection wrote below her husband's sprawling signature, "You see how he has treated me. If you don't come immediately to this address, you shall never see me again. There is the river and worse."

When she had posted the letter she crept into bed and fell asleep thinking of what she should wear Thursday afternoon, the day he was sure to come.

But Violett did not come.

When her letter reached him he tied it around a bit of stone, and standing on the rocks near the Cradle, dropped it into the sea, unread.

Then he sat down and listened to the song of the waves. It seemed to him that they had washed the evil out of her poor little letters and that the beauty of the love that is good sounded in their soft voices.

Peace had come back to him.

IV

An evening in February. The ends of the great bridge hidden in swathing folds of fog, the great arch hung seemingly in mid-air. Below, dark and greasy, the river slid from oblivion into oblivion.

A fine rain dripped from the fog, and through the thick atmosphere the strokes of a great clock fell muffled — nine soft, booming vibrations.

A girl stood just beyond the blur of fog that hid the end of the bridge, peering down at the water. Her big hat hid her face, but her tight green cloth jacket showed a graceful, rather overbuxom figure. As the last stroke of the clock sank hushedly into the misty atmosphere, she turned sharply. Another girl stood beside her grotesquely prim in the costume of the Salvation Army.

"Oh, Gawd!" the first ejaculated, with a giggle.

"Put a guard on your tongue! And come to Jesus. He is waiting for you. Come to Him."

The droning, mechanical voice from the depths of the bonnet ceased suddenly.

"Aw, chuck it! You mike me tired."

The Salvation Army girl drew back as her eyes fell on the gayly tinted face under the scraggy feathers.

"Why, Maud Courtenay!"

"Min!" There was a short pause, and then Maud went on with a giggle, "Are you down on me about d'Orsay? I suppose you are."

Minnie shook her head. "No, I ain't. I was at first, but I ain't any more. Where is 'e?"

"Gawd knows — and 'e don't tell much. I left Sam six weeks ago. 'E drank too much to suit my book."

"But — were n't you in America?"

The elder girl burst into a loud laugh. "Not us, my love! That was just 'is little gyme. We 've been living in a palace over in Rotherhithe — Love's young dream. But you, Min — why are you in that get-up?"

"I 'm saving souls."

"Souls be blowed! Where 's — Stevie — Violett, or whatever 'is flowery nime is?"

Minnie hesitated. "I don't know where 'e is."

"You don't *know!* Why, Sam told me a fairy-story about your a-goin' out to meet 'im in the park mornings."

"That was n't a fairy-story, Maud. It was *true.* Every day 'e used to come." Minnie's voice was full of pride.

"Well?"

"And then — he went away. I — I 've written — *once* — to — the place he used to live in, but — he 'as n't answered."

Both girls were silent for a minute, and then Maud, with a sudden upward jerk of her chin, laughed.

"All alike, ain't they? Did he — was he in love with you?"

"Yes."

"Ever kiss you?"

"Once."

"Well, then, I don't see — oh, well, they 're all alike. So you 've took to soul-snatching. Like it?"

Minnie laughed faintly. "I did at first, but it 's awful dull. Never a bit of fun."

"*Fun 's* all right. What you going to do to-night?"

"Big mass meeting. I sing, you know."

"Prayers and so on?"

"Yes. And tambourines and drums. It 's real exciting sometimes; people cry and faint. What are you going to do?"

Maud laughed grimly. "Me? Oh, I 'm on my w'y to Marlborough 'ouse. A fam'ly dinner to meet the German hemperor."

Minnie stared. "What do you mean? 'Ave you got an engagement?"

"No. I 've got no money for agents. I 'm on the loose. *I* am — going to the Italia. It 's warm there, and light."

Minnie understood. "An' they laugh and eat and drink — all my bloomin' pals whine and talk rot. I 'm sick of it, I can tell you."

Maud bent forward suddenly and peered under the absurd bonnet.

"Like my 'at, Min?"

"Yes. It 's becoming!"

"Try it on."

Hurriedly the two girls changed hats and then half shamefacedly looked at each other.

"Put it more to the left. *My*, them plumes is becoming!"

"Pokes ain't so bad on a nice round face like yours, Maudie."

The green jacket hung in folds from Minnie's thin shoulders, but her long cloak hid decorously all of Maud's piteous finery. Minnie's cheeks were flushed.

"I *am* so sick of the army!"

"Cut along to the Italia. You look sweet, dear."

"So do you. Oh, rub the paint off, or the captain will pounce on you."

Agreeing to meet at the same spot at midnight, the two girls separated, each one going her way through the fine rain, her heart beating with excitement.

V

Rose Sonnenthal had died that afternoon. Violett, for whom she had sent, stood by her bed, his eyes dark with sorrow. He was a little bewildered by being once more in the roar of the great city that had brought him misery, and even the dying woman's confession of her cruel mistake and the Pole's falsity did not affect him keenly.

The main fact, that she was dying, blinded his eyes to lesser things.

She was dying; going away from the few to the many, from the lesser to the greater. That she was glad to go did not surprise him, nor did the reason for her sending for him.

"Promise me," she had said, "that you will help Félix."

"I will help him." The boy did not ask how or when he was to help the man who must hate him for the blow given that evening when the world had more or less ended. He would help Sonnenthal in any way at any time. Then Rose told him how she had learned of Petrovsky's villainy months ago.

"I should have told you, Violett, and begged your pardon, but — it was too late. Félix has a new pupil."

"Who is he?"

A sudden aching longing for the wonderful instruction he had lost caught him.

Rose laughed faintly. "It 's a — girl. She *is* a genius. And she is young, and pretty. Of *course* he likes her. It is perfectly natural." Then she laughed again at the innocent vagueness of Violett's face.

"He *loves* her, you see. He is *in love* with her. You must make him marry her."

"Make him!"

"Yes. You see, Violett, she is poor, — a cousin of Petrovsky's. He — Félix — might not marry her, but he must. If he lets himself lapse into Bohemianism, he will lose all his music. I have bored him, but I have kept him straight."

Even Violett understood this.

"Yes. He must keep straight. He must be good."

The dying woman nodded. "Yes. And — he likes you, Violett. He will not care so much about your music, for he is teaching Marie, but — you are musical, so he will let you look after him. And — never be practical with him. He can't stand practical people. Be eccentric; make the commonest things seem caprices. I have learned, now that it is too late."

When she fainted and they sent him away, the

boy roamed through the foggy streets for hours, thinking.

He was thinking, not of his promise to protect the unprotectible, but of death. And it seemed to him like a cool, soft mist that hovered over each life, ever ready to settle on and obliterate it with gentle touch.

It seemed to him like a slow-breaking green wave that should wash away the writing on the sand.

It seemed to him a great bird on whose slow, steady pinions each mortal shall some day be borne into the sunset glow with unblinded eyes.

VI

WHEN he met Minnie, as it was written, at the corner near the bridge, just as the girl, frightened by her evening at the music hall, had changed back into the monotonous safety of her grotesque bonnet and cloak, he was not surprised.

"Minnie!"

"Violett!"

That was all, but it is all-sufficient. Where were the streets and the houses? Where were the encroaching fog and the misty lights? Where were the rest of the world's inhabitants? Gone, all of them. And the universe was a spark of fire just large enough for two.

A few minutes later things began to come back, —a bit of the bridge, whither they had gone; a big electric light; a patch of shining river; one or two people.

And then Violett dropped Minnie's hand, and a slow blush crept up his face.

"What is it?" she asked sharply.

"I am ashamed."

In matters of love the scruples should be the woman's.

Minnie tossed her head. "If you are ashamed, then you had better go."

"Where shall I go?"

His old passivity, his uncowardly lack of resistance to greater forces, sounded distinctly in his voice.

"I — I mean if you are ashamed. But what are you ashamed of?"

"Because I love you, and because you love me."

She had taken off her hideous bonnet, and now gave her neglected head another toss.

" 'Ow do you know I love you, Mr. Vi'lett Maule? If I 'ad, I 'd 'ave married you, would n't I?"

But coquetry was a weapon powerless against the boy. He looked at her earnestly for a moment.

"Minnie, where is your mother?"

"Ma? Oh, she 's all right. She lives in Liverpool with 'er brother, since pa died."

"Where is Mr. d'Orsay?"

"Mr. d'Orsay is in Rotherhithe. 'E went off with Maud Courtenay. You," she continued, with a sudden access of bitterness, "you need n't 'ave been so careful of 'is feelings."

The big clock struck one as Violett, turning, made his declaration of faith.

"I was n't, Minnie. I did not care about *his* feelings; it was — *ours*."

She paused for a moment, irritated by the pre-

sence of something that she did not understand. Then she said suddenly, —

"I nearly jumped into the river to-night. I am tired of life."

"So am I."

Again the vast difference between his feelings and hers half angered her.

"Let 's jump in," she suggested.

Violett leaned over the stone coping of the bridge and gazed at the water.

"No," he said quietly; "it 's too dirty."

"You don't think it 's *wrong*, then?"

And knowing great passages of the Bible by heart as he did, having been brought up by the simply pious Agnes, having lived in daily communion with the greatest of nature's voices, the sea, — being what he was, a pure-hearted grown child, he answered from the depths of his heart, "*No.*"

He could see no wrong in ending his life, if that life grew to be unbearable. And the thought of the smooth, cool water, so familiar to him all his days, was pleasant.

But he was not hysterical.

"No. Why should we?"

Ready tears sprang to her eyes.

"You do not love me; you are a heartless thing!"

He paled a little.

"If you loved me — as I do you — you would take me away — somewhere — Violett."

Her hand seemed to burn his arm.

"Minnie," he stammered with stiff lips, "I — we must n't think of that."

"Violett — he 'as left me, and I have no money — I am — *hungry!*"

It was a touch prompted by her dramatic instinct, and it quivered through him like an electric shock.

"Hungry!"

"Yes. And — so lonely! And people — say things to me. Violett, I — I love you."

The fog had fallen close around them, and in its folds she leaned heavily against him. He stood like a stone pillar.

The great clock struck again.

And it was months since he had seen her; and he had what is called the artistic temperament.

Minnie's cold little hands stealing up his sleeves were like the hands of the Fog-Spirit.

"*Violett!*"

The hands were about his neck now, and gently pulling his head down.

The "Song of the Sea" pulsed suddenly in his ears; he saw the sunny sea, the whirl of white birds against the blue water.

His eyes closed as the girl's cheek touched his.

"*Violett!*"

With a little cry he broke away and rushed into the gray darkness.

PART V

I

"MONSIEUR Violette, *attention!*"

Marie Varsky, at the far end of the dusky room, swept a sudden curtsy, laughing out of the billow of her creamy skirts with merry eyes.

"Zat," she said, carefully exaggerating her charming accent, "is — ze poetry of motion. Now play me somesing of a wildness!"

It was a June evening, and the lamps not yet being brought in, the long room, with its polished floor, was almost dark, save for the splashes of yellow that came in from the electric lights on the pier, and the faint sunset glow from the opposite windows.

Violett, at the piano, played something with absent-minded fingers.

The girl, poised to dance, laughed.

"Ah là, là, wake up, boy! Who could dance to such a music! What is it, then, my hair?"

Her hair, a wonderful red-gold fleece, hung loose, almost to her feet; and as she danced, she wove it in and out, twisting it around her supple arms, smiling through its strands, waving it like a banner.

"Your hair? No. I was thinking."

A pout came to her pale, flat lips.

"Thinking! It is to lose time, to think, boy. *Faire, jamais penser*, that is my motto. And yours is *Penser, jamais faire.*"

He was not sufficiently interested to ask her to translate. He was trying to decide how to tell her the result of his last talk with Sonnenthal.

Three months had passed since Rose's death, and for over six weeks the three, chaperoned by a very sleepy aunt of Marie's, had been living at Littlebay.

Violett had been taken because Rose Sonnenthal's last request to her husband had been to that effect. And the Master, in spite of his overwhelming love for the young Pole, was forced by his artistic side to take up his old interest for the boy where he had dropped it.

Marie Varski was a musical freak; Violett was a genius. The girl, trained like a race-horse from her earliest childhood, played amazingly; Violett played hardly at all; Sonnenthal was in love with the girl; the boy he had first disliked, then loved for his talent, and then brought with him as a sort of *post mortem* favor to his wife.

Yet Marie's musical gymnastics bored him unutterably, and Violett's half-inarticulate efforts at composition filled the best of him with delight.

Madame Ranoffsky, the sleepy aunt, was a nullity; Marie, with her plain white face and won-

derful hair, the greatest torment ever sent to a middle-aged *viveur* to love, for his sins.

And Violett, half dazed between the possession of a piano and the responsibilities of match-making, lived in a sort of shifting dream.

"Marie!" The young girl, who had plaited her hair into a long tail and was pretending to skip rope with it, turned quickly.

"Marie, the Master is going to marry you."

She burst out laughing.

"Tiens! Is he, indeed?"

"Yes. Aren't you glad?"

"Glad? Oh, boy, boy! Why should I marry? I know men too well."

"All men are not alike."

"No. But all husbands are."

She had loosened her hair again, and, coming up behind him, twisted a long strand around his neck.

"I will not marry him."

"But he will be unhappy without you."

"I am here!"

"But you love him."

She flushed and scampered back into the gloom.

"Do I? How know you, oh, boy?"

"I know. Don't you?"

"You know. Yet — you ask."

"Please tell me."

"Eh bien. Well, then — yes. I love him. Who could help it?"

He started at the fierceness in her voice.

"Then — you will marry him."

She came back and stood by him.

"No. I love him now. I should as a husband hate him. I knew — *her*."

It was too great a puzzle for the boy. His nature was too passive to be able to cope with problems like this. He rose.

"I am going out now, Marie. I am tired. But you must marry him."

She watched him with wonder in her eyes as he crossed the little garden and went down to the edge of the waves.

II

"VIOLETT!" Sonnenthal laid his hand on the boy's arm. "She has refused me." Wondering amusement, mixed with triumph, was in the Master's eyes and voice. "She will not marry me."

"I know. She does not like husbands."

"So — poor Rose and you have failed. Now tell me — why did you try? What difference did it make to you?"

"*She* wanted you to marry her."

"She did n't like Marie, poor thing."

Sonnenthal sent a flat stone skimming over the quiet water, and watched it thoughtfully.

"I 'm not blaming her for not liking Marie, God knows; but there is the fact, and I don't understand her trying to help the girl."

Violett turned. "It was n't on *her* account," he answered. "It was on yours."

"Mine? My account?"

"Yes. She thought that it would be bad for your music if you — did anything wrong."

The sound of the man's jarring laugh broke the evening quiet.

"If I did anything wrong! I! Why, my dear boy, I never did anything right in my life! She knew that. And my music has n't suffered. Do

you think it has?" he added sharply, as Violett did not speak.

"I think — that everything is better if it is done by a good person."

"You are a confounded prig, my dear. What about Chopin? Was he a good person? You remember his 'Life' that I gave you?"

"He was not good."

"Well — and his music?"

Violett hesitated.

"It is beautiful music, but it is not good. It reminds me"— But he could not say that it recalled to him the scene in the park that morning when he had kissed Minnie.

"It is not good," he concluded, with an air of finality.

But Sonnenthal was in too good a humor to be annoyed.

"Well, you have done your best, my dear boy, and failed. Now listen. I am going to Normandy the day after to-morrow. Where will you go?"

"I shall go home."

"Very well. I am sending you my wife's piano. Put newspapers inside it, over the strings, every night, to keep out the damp."

Then he went back to the house, and Violett sat down by the waves to try to realize his great happiness. He had done his best. He had tried to

make Sonnenthal marry Marie; that he had utterly failed did not in the least disturb him.

His world was in tune. In a minor key his life melody was set, but it was harmonically perfect, and the sea at his feet loved him.

The tragedy of his wasted genius did not appeal to him; he was too old to learn to be a great pianist, and Sonnenthal, with a kindly gift, had now definitely turned his back on him. He would never learn to express to others the great ideas that came to him, but these things brought no twinge of self-pity to his simple heart. He had never known ambition, and hence was spared the bitterest pain in the world, — that of feeling his talent wasted without recognition. He would go back to the island; to the peace that he loved; to old Agnes who loved him; to the rocks and the sand and the sea; to his few books; to his innocent memories of Minnie; and added to these dear things, he would have a piano.

He remembered the Adamses; the caress of wet sand to bare feet; Bob Venn and his boat; the quiet afternoons in the old kitchen, with the gentle ticking of the clock and the square of sunlight on the floor.

He would put the piano in the little parlor, and there where his mother had loved to sit, he would play.

III

With a sort of superstition about leaving the sea even for a time, on his way to what seemed more the sea than any other bit of it, Violett took a boat from Littlebay to Eastborough, whence Bob Venn was to take him home in the old sailboat.

The Queen Anne, full of noisy excursionists, reached Eastborough at about six in the evening, and Bob not being due until the following morning, the boy put up at an inn, had some supper, and then went out for a walk. The moon had come up, and the wide water, silvered like a mirror, stretched wonderfully quiet under his eyes.

The beach was almost deserted to the north of the town, where a fair was being held. Violett strolled along, his hands in his pockets, his eyes quietly alert. He saw much more in the simple scene than would have an ordinary observer. He noted the tiny footprints of water fowl on the firm sand; a faint dark stain against the horizon that meant a France-bound steamer; not a bit of seaweed escaped him; not a pale star beyond the moonlight.

And the "Song of the Sea," softer, less decided than of old, but tenderer and more consoling, with-

out lack of rhythm, told him a wonderful story of future happiness.

Minnie had disappeared from his thoughts; her great rival, Harmony, had vanquished her. The only Minnie left was a little child, his thoughts of whom, interwoven with the songs of Nature, enhanced and did not jar on the beauties of its music.

A small boat came around a spit of sand ahead. Black, flat against the gleaming water, its two occupants stood out like silhouettes. Violett watched them.

Suddenly the little craft began to rock rapidly. It was a foolhardy trick. Then came a short scream, and the woman, reaching frantically for an unshipped oar, nearly went headlong into the water. A peal of foolish laughter followed, and the boat rocked again.

The oar, a black streak on the water, was now out of reach. They could not row with two; what can they do with one?

Violett took off his boots and his coat, and wading in up to his waist, struck out for the oar.

He caught it without difficulty, and then swimming after the boat called that he was bringing the oar.

"Your oar is safe — I 'm coming — but stop rocking the boat."

As he put his hand on the gunwale the woman turned and looked down into his wet face.

It was Minnie.

And the second that they gazed into each other's eyes was an eternity.

"Violett!"

"Minnie!"

Their lips moved, but only their eyes uttered the words.

The foolish laugh startled them.

"Get in — come 'long, Adams. We 're old friends, — bygones be bygones." D'Orsay held out his hand.

"I — have brought your oar."

"Thanks. Better get in and use it — I 'm tired."

"Yes, Violett — I 'm afraid," added Minnie. "You *see*" —

Violett got into the boat and took the oars.

"You ought not to be out alone; there are rocks here; shall I take you to Eastborough?"

"No, no; we are at Axby, over *there*. He — has an engagement there."

D'Orsay, who had climbed to the stern and sat by his wife, nodded. "Damn bad pay; rotten engagement; what you been doing, you Lorathio — Lothario" —

"Sam! please" —

Minnie was very thin, and Violett saw with fierce resentment that she was afraid of her husband.

"'Sam! please'—Min, my dearest, my d-ducky—look at your old adorer. Pretty wet, is n't 'e?"

Violett rowed steadily, his eyes fixed on the skyline beyond the two heads.

"I s'pose," d'Orsay went on, suddenly dropping his facetious tone and speaking half threateningly, "I—you thought Min was in love with you, Mr. Whatshername? Well, she was n't, you see. 'Ere we are, 'aving our second 'oneymoon at the seashore like two damned thingummies—love-birds."

Minnie's lips shook and her eyes glistened with tears. Violett did not speak, even when d'Orsay offered him some brandy and then took a long pull at the flask himself.

The moon smiled as she had smiled half an hour before, but where was the beauty of the world? Where was the peace that had been then? Where was the exquisite harmony?

Beyond the spit of sand, back about a mile, the lights of a small town glimmered amid the darkness of trees. The jetty stretching out towards the boat showed the course to be taken.

Violett rowed steadily. At length d'Orsay slipped from his seat into the bottom of the boat.

"He is asleep," said Minnie.

IV

THEIR eyes met, and the rhythmical beat of the oars ceased.

"You are ill, Minnie."

She laughed, an odd little laugh, sad, yet with an undercurrent of satisfied pride in it.

"Yes. A decline, I think."

"What is that?"

"You 'ave n't anything especial, but you just die. I am glad I 'm going to die, Violett."

"What does — the doctor say?"

"A warm winter, good food an' wine, and — 'appiness. Me 'appy!"

The circles that he had always thought beautiful had deepened about her eyes; her lips were hardly redder than her white cheeks; her shoulders showed pointed under her pink blouse.

"You — must n't die, Min."

He hardly knew his own voice.

"Yes. You are too good, Violett. If you loved me I could live, but you don't."

His mute protestation brought a little color to her face.

"Well then, — you see what *'e* is. I — it 's that that 's killing me. He made me come down 'ere just to show that 'e was my master, but 'e *'ates* me. Bah!"

Gathering her skirts closer, she shrank away from the drunken man who was her master. A boat load of men dressed as nigger minstrels passed to their left; a sound of music floated out from the receding town; a scrap of cloud fluttered across the moon's face. Rising, the young woman stepped carefully past her husband, and kneeling in front of the boy, laid her hands on his shoulders.

"Violett, you are too good for me, I know, but —I can't stand it any longer. I tried after you went away, that night in London. I went back and forgave him. It was all for you. I know I 'm bad to want you to take me, but — I love you, and you could make me good."

His misery had carved such lines in his white face that it was like that of a stranger.

"Dear — kiss me."

The lights receded farther and farther; and the two waking people in the boat noticed it no more than did the sleeper. They were adrift.

V

THREE minutes after they had passed the boat filled with nigger minstrels, their boat struck the rock for which it was bound.

There was a crash, a cry, and the little craft, pinned by a sharp point of the rock, settled slowly.

Minnie, shrieking, clung to Violett, until he pushed her roughly aside and began to bail with his hands, as he called to the men in the other boat, who had put about and were approaching.

"Come in to the left, there! Look out for the rock! You can't see it! Be *quiet*, Minnie, you are perfectly safe."

The moonlight fell on the strange scene, — the blackened faces and gaudy costumes of the rescuers; on the hysterical woman and the quietly working boy; on the sleeper in the stern.

"We can't come in any farther! Can't you swim out? Lucky you 're only two. We 're full now!"

Violett turned and glanced sharply at the other boat. It was true, she was already overloaded.

"There are three of us — *only* three," Minnie called, wringing her hands nervously.

The men paused for a minute, talking in an undertone.

"We can't help you unless you promise that

you won't all get in. Sorry, but we ought n't to take any of you. We 've got a leak, too. *Now then?*"

The speaker faced them, his painted lips gleaming scarlet.

"We 'll take the woman and one of the men — where is the other?"

Minnie pointed to her husband. "He 's — asleep."

"Asleep!"

The spokesman cleared his throat. "Come along, then. *You* help her out to us. Can you swim?"

Violett laughed. "Yes, I can swim."

"If you try to overload us we 'll push you into the water. Ready?"

The grim contrast between the man's looks and his words held Violett's attention for a second.

Then he nodded. "All right. We won't overload you. Come, Minnie."

She turned to him and he took her hand.

"Good-by, Min."

With a wild scream she flung herself into his arms. "No, no! No, no! No, no! *You* are coming! He must stay! He is asleep; he won't know! Come, come quickly or — he might wake up!"

"Min, we have no time to lose; the boat will go to pieces in a minute. Good-by."

"You — *make* him come! I won't *let* him be drowned. I tell you I won't let him be drowned! That man is a devil; I hate him! — no, no, *no, no!*"

Violett caught her by the shoulders. "Min, don't you see — I must. He let me row; he trusted me; and — he is asleep. Hush!"

The men in the other boat, with their black faces, hideous red lips, and grotesque woolly wigs, were motionless with excitement.

Violett kissed Minnie, and then, slipping carefully into the quiet water, swam with her to the other boat. Two of the men helped her over the gunwale, and she sat crouched in the stern while he went back.

"One of you will have to help. He is dead drunk."

D'Orsay, snoring loudly, was with great difficulty hoisted into the boat, and then Violett laid his hands on the gunwale, which was perilously near the water.

"Minnie, good-by."

"Cawn't you hold on till we get back or send some one? It's only about three miles." The speaker's voice broke.

"No. I can't swim long — get cramp; and the boat will break up in ten minutes."

His white young face was very beautiful.

"Minnie, write to Agnes, will you? And — you do love me, even though my father was hanged?"

Minnie stared vacantly at him. "Stevie — dear Stevie," she murmured.

One of the men burst into loud sobs.

Violett reached for Minnie's hand, kissed it, and then held his out to the man nearest him.

"Thank you," he said, "row slowly."

"God bless you — mate," was the answer.

Then, very slowly, the dangerously laden boat withdrew, and Violett swam back to the little wreck.

VI

He looked about him. It was more than three miles to the land, and he had never been able to swim long distances. Cramp was horrible suffering, and this, sitting in the doomed boat, very peaceful.

Death was coming, and he could wait. Then, too, it was better — better for Minnie and better for him.

The sound of the quiet waves was very beautiful, — it was harmony. His death was harmony, as the last few minutes before the boat struck had been rapturous discord.

Minnie!

The one perfectly beautiful and perfect person in the world. Of course she had not been able to marry him, whose father —

His father was somewhere. Where?

Agnes would cry — poor blind tears. Bob Venn's mother lay in the sea too. And when storms groaned and threatened, when sweet moonlight gleamed on the waves, when the dawn-quiet brooded, there would be no discord.

He, Violett Maule, in spite of his father's sin, had not brought discord into the eternal harmony.

The Adamses were swimming in the moonlight, — Louisa and Henry and the baby and Stephen, —

no, he was Stevie. The señora called him Stevie. Bayne knew. He had always known, and he did not mind. Minnie did not mind.

When the boat broke up Violett found the water warm and pleasant after the coolness of the night air through his wet clothes. And the sound of it was beautiful. He was of it now, — of the water he loved, and of the "Song of the Sea." He was a note in the song, — a sad gray note, but he belonged to it. . . .

There was of course a short, involuntary struggle, and then after it the water was quiet again in the moonlight.

THE END

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